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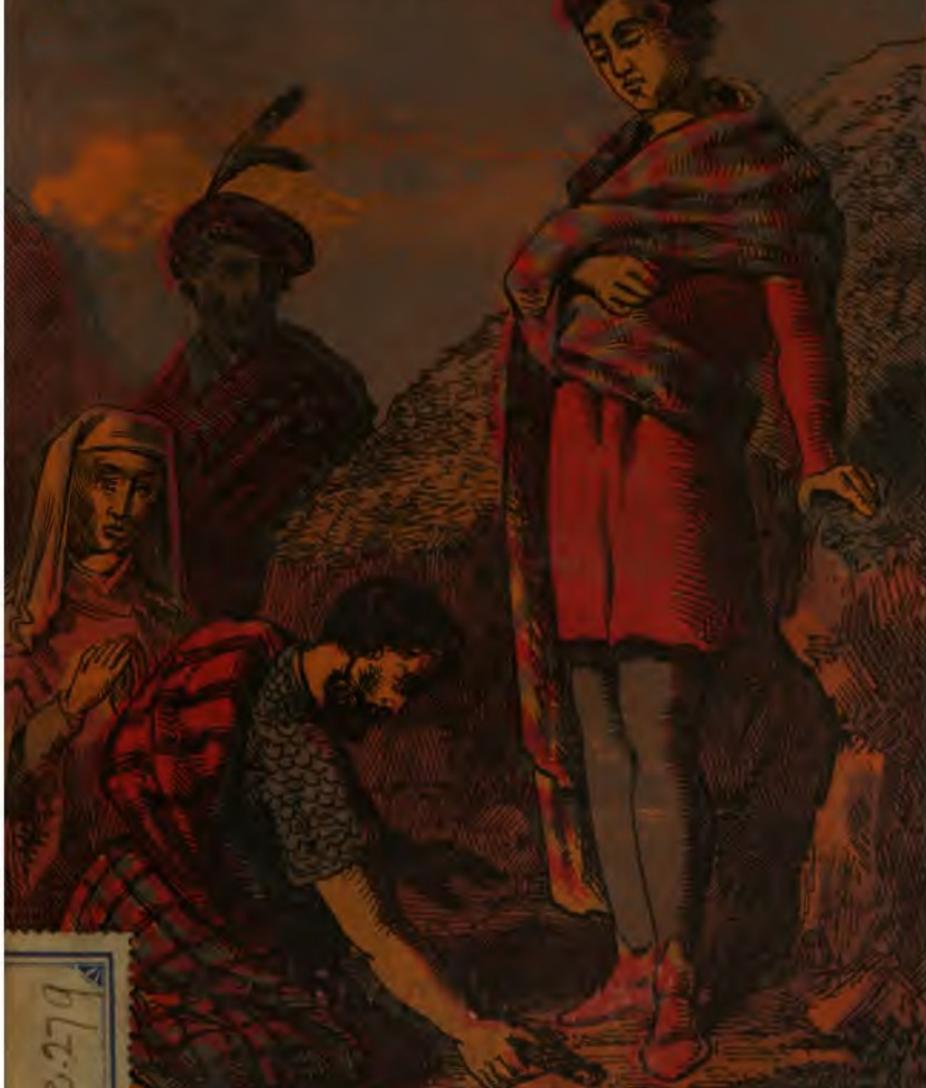
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LORD OF THE ISLES

BY SIR
WALTER SCOTT



280.e.279

LONDON AND NEW YORK:
GEORGE ROUTLEDGE AND SONS.

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THE
LORD OF THE ISLES.

A Poem.

IN SIX CANTOS.

WITH NOTES.

BY
SIR WALTER SCOTT,
BART.

London and New York:
GEORGE ROUTLEDGE AND SONS.
1868.

THE LORD OF THE ISLES.

A Poem.

IN SIX CANTOS.

WITH NOTES

TO

THE MOST NOBLE

JOHN JAMES MARQUIS OF ABERCORN,

&c., &c., &c.,

THIS POEM IS INSCRIBED

BY THE AUTHOR.



ADVERTISEMENT TO THE FIRST EDITION.

The scene of this Poem lies, at first, in the Castle of Arornish, on the coast of Argyleshire; and, afterwards, in the Islands of Skye and Arran, and upon the coast of Ayrshire. Finally, it is laid near Stirling. The story opens in the spring of the year 1307, when Bruce, who had been driven out of Scotland by the English, and the Barons who adhered to that foreign interest, returned from the Island of Rachrin, on the coast of Ireland, again to assert his claims to the Scottish crown. Many of the personages and incidents introduced are of historical celebrity. The authorities used are chiefly those of the venerable Lord Hailes, as well entitled to be called the restorer of Scottish history, as Bruce the restorer of Scottish monarchy; and of Archdeacon Barbour, a correct edition of whose Metrical History of Robert Bruce will soon, I trust, appear, under the care of my learned friend, the Rev. Dr Jamieson.

ABBOTSFORD, 10th December, 1814.

The Lord of the Isles.

CANTO FIRST.

AUTUMN departs—but still his mantle's fold
Rests on the groves of noble Somerville,
Beneath a shroud of russet droop'd with gold,
Tweed and his tributaries mingle still;
Hoarser the wind, and deeper sounds the rill,
Yet lingering notes of silvan music swell,
The deep-toned cushat, and the redbreast shrill;
And yet some tints of summer splendour tell
When the broad sun sinks down on Ettrick's western fell.

Autumn departs—from Gala's fields no more
Come rural sounds our kindred banks to cheer;
Blent with the stream, and gale that wafts it o'er,
No more the distant reaper's mirth we hear.
The last blithe shout hath died upon our ear,
And harvest-home hath hush'd the clanging wain,
On the waste hill no forms of life appear,
Save where, sad laggard of the autumnal train,
Some age-struck wanderer gleams few ears of scatter'd grain.

Deem'st thou these sadden'd scenes have pleasure still,
Lovest thou through Autumn's fading realms to stray,
To see the heath-flower wither'd on the hill,
To listen to the wood's expiring lay,
To note the red leaf shivering on the spray,
To mark the last bright tints the mountain stain,
On the waste fields to trace the gleaner's way,
And moralize on mortal joy and pain?—
O! if such scenes thou lovest, scorn not the minstrel strain.

No! do not scorn, although its hoarser note
Scarce with the cushat's homely song can vie,
Though faint its beauties as the tints remote,
That gleam through mist in Autumn's evening sky,
And few as leaves that tremble, sear and dry,

When wild November hath his bugle wound;
 Nor mock my toil—a lonely gleaner I,
 Through fields time-wasted, on sad inquest bound,
 Where happier bards of yore have richer harvest found.
 So shalt thou list, and haply not unmoved,
 To a wild tale of Albyn's warrior day;
 In distant lands, by the rough West reproved,
 Still live some relics of the ancient lay.
 For, when on Coolin's hills the lights decay,
 With such the Seer of Skye the eve beguiles;
 'Tis known amid the ~~pathless~~ wastes of Reay,
 In Harris known, and in Iona's piles,
 Where rest from mortal coil the Mighty of the Isles.

I.

"WAKE, Maid of Lorn!" the Minstrels sung.—
 Thy rugged halls, Artornish! rung,
 And the dark seas, thy towers that have,
 Heaved on the beach a softer wave,
 As 'mid the tuneful choir to keep
 The diapason of the Deep.
 Lull'd were the winds on Inninmore,
 And green Loch-Alline's woodland shore,
 As if wild woods and waves had pleasure
 In listing to the lovely measure.
 And ne'er to symphony more sweet
 Gave mountain echoes answer meet,
 Since, met from mainland and from isle,
 Ross, Arran, Islay, and Argyle.
 Each minstrel's tributary lay
 Paid homage to the festal day.
 Dull and dishonour'd were the bard,
 Worthless of guerdon and regard,
 Deaf to the hope of minstrel fame,
 Or lady's smiles, his noblest aim,
 Who on that morn's resistless call,
 Were silent in Artornish hall.

II.

"Wake, Maid of Lorn!"—'twas thus they sung,
 And yet more proud the descant rung.
 "Wake, Maid of Lorn! high right is ours,
 To charm dull sleep from Beauty's bowers;
 Earth, Ocean, Air, have nought so shy
 But owns the power of minstrelsy.
 In Lettermore the timid deer
 Will pause, the harp's wild chime to hear;
 Bude Heiskar's seal through surges dark
 Will long pursue the minstrel's bark;*

* Note 1.

To list his notes, the eagle proud
 Will poise him on Ben Cailliach's cloud;
 Then let not Maiden's ear disdain
 The summons of the minstrel train,
 But, while our harps wild music make,
 Edith of Lorn, awake, awake!

III.

"O wake, while Dawn, with dewy shine,
 Wakes Nature's charms to vie with thine!
 She bids the mottled thrush rejoice
 To mate thy melody of voice;
 The dew that on the violet lies
 Mocks the dark lustre of thine eyes;
 But, Edith, wake, and all we see
 Of sweet and fair shall yield to thee!"—
 "She comes not yet," grey Ferrand cried;
 "Brethren, let softer spell be tried,
 Those notes prolong'd, that soothing theme,
 Which best may mix with Beauty's dream,
 And whisper, with their silvery fone,
 The hope she loves, yet fears to own."
 He spoke, and on the harp-strings died
 The strains of flattery and of pride;
 More soft, more low, more tender fell
 The lay of love he bade them tell.

IV.

"Wake, Maid of Lorn, the moments fly,
 Which yet that maiden-name allow;
 Wake, Maiden, wake! the hour is nigh,
 When love shall claim a plighted vow,
 By Fear, thy bosom's fluttering guest,
 By Hope, that soon shall fears remove,
 We bid thee break the bonds of rest,
 And wake thee at the call of Love!

"Wake, Edith wake! in yonder bay
 Lies many a galley gaily mann'd,
 We hear the merry pibroch's play,
 We see the streamers' silken band.
 What Chieftain's praise these pibroch's swell,
 What crest is on these banners wove,
 The harp, the minstrel, dare not tell—
 The riddle must be read by Love."

V.

Retired her maiden train among,
 Edith of Lorn received the song,
 But tamed the minstrel's pride had been
 That had her cold demeanour seen;

For not upon her cheek awoke
 The glow of pride when Flattery spoke,
 Nor could their tenderest numbers bring
 One sigh responsive to the string.
 As vainly had her maidens vied
 In skill to deck the princely bride.
 Her locks, in dark-brown length array'd,
 Cathleen of Ulne, 'twas thine to braid;
 Young Eva with meet reverence drew
 On the light foot the silken shoe,
 While on the ankle's slender round
 Those strings of pearl fair Bertha wound,
 That, bleach'd Lochryan's depths within,
 Seem'd dusky still on Edith's skin.
 But Einion, of experience old,
 Had weightiest task—the mantle's fold
 In many an artful plait she tied,
 To show the form it seem'd to hide,
 Till on the floor descending roll'd
 Its waves of crimson blent with gold.

VI.

O! lives there now so cold a maid,
 Who thus in beauty's pomp array'd,
 In beauty's proudest pitch of power,
 And conquest won—the bridal hour—
 With every charm that wins the heart,
 By Nature given, enhanced by Art,
 Could yet the fair reflection view,
 In the bright mirror pictured true,
 And not one dimple on her cheek
 A tell-tale consciousness bespeak?—
 Lives still such maid?—Fair damsels, say,
 For further vouches not my lay,
 Save that such lived in Britain's isle,
 When Lorn's bright Edith scorn'd to smile.

VII.

But Morag, to whose fostering care
 Proud Lorn had given his daughter fair,
 Morag, who saw a mother's aid
 By all a daughter's love repaid,
 (Strict was that bond—most kind of all—
 Inviolate in Highland hall)—
 Grey Morag sate a space apart,
 In Edith's eyes to read her heart.
 In vain the attendant's fond appeal
 To Morag's skill, to Morag's zeal;
 She mark'd her child receive their care,
 Cold as the image sculptur'd fair,

(Form of some sainted patroness),
 Which cloister'd maids combine to dress;
 She mark'd—and knew her nursling's heart
 In the vain pomp took little part.
 Wistful a while she gazed—then pressed
 The maiden to her anxious breast
 In finish'd loveliness—and led
 To where a turret's airy head,
 Slender and steep, and battled round,
 O'erlook'd, dark Mull! thy mighty Sound,*
 Where thwarting tides, with mingled roar,
 Part thy swarth hills from Morven's shore.

VIII.

“Daughter,” she said, “these seas behold,
 Round twice a hundred islands roll'd,
 From Hirt, that hears their northern roar,
 To the green Islay's fertile shore; †
 Or mainland turn where many a tower
 Owns thy bold brother's feudal power,
 Each on its own dark cape reclined,
 And listening to its own wild wind,
 From where Mingarry, sternly placed, ‡
 O'erawes the woodland and the waste,
 To where Dunstaffnage hears the raging
 Of Connal with its rocks engaging.
 Think'st thou, amid this ample round,
 A single brow but thine has frown'd,
 To sadden this auspicious morn,
 That bids the daughter of high Lorn
 Impledge her spousal faith to wed
 The heir of mighty Somerled? §
 Ronald, from many a hero sprung,
 The fair, the valiant, and the young,
 LORD OF THE ISLES, whose lofty name ||
 A thousand bards have given to fame,
 The mate of monarchs, and allied
 On equal terms with England's pride.—
 From Chieftain's tower to bondsman's cot,
 Who hears the tale, and triumphs not?
 The damsel dons her best attire,
 The shepherd lights his beltane fire,
 Joy! joy! each warder's horn hath sung,
 Joy! joy! each matin bell hath rung;
 The holy priest says grateful mass,
 Loud shouts each hardy galla-glass,
 No mountain den holds outcast boor,
 Of heart so dull, of soul so poor,

* Note 2.

† Note 3.

‡ Note 4.

§ Note 5.

|| Note 6.

But he hath flung his task aside,
And claim'd this morn for holy-tide;
Yet, empress of this joyful day,
Edith is sad while all are gay."—

IX.

Proud Edith's soul came to her eye,
Resentment check'd the struggling sigh.
Her hurrying hand indignant dried
The burning tears of injured pride—
"Morag, forbear! or lend thy praise
To swell yon hireling harpers' lays;
Make to yon maids thy boast of power,
That they may waste a wondering hour,
Telling of banners proudly borne,
Of pealing bell and bugle horn,
Or, theme more dear, of robes of price,
Crownlets and gauds of rare device.
But thou, experienced as thou art,
Think'st thou with these to cheat the heart,
That, bound in strong affection's chain,
Looks for return and looks in vain?
No! sum thine Edith's wretched lot
In these brief words—He loves her not!

X.

"Debate it not—too long I strove
To call his cold observance love,
All blinded by the league that styled
Edith of Lorn,—while yet a child,
She tripp'd the heath by Morag's side,—
The brave Lord Ronald's destined brida,
Ere yet I saw him, while afar
His brordsword blazed in Scotland's war,
Train'd to believe our fates the same,
My bosom throb'd when Ronald's name
Came gracing Fame's heroic tale,
Like perfume on the summer gale.
What pilgrim sought our halls, nor told
Of Ronald's deeds in battle bold;
Who touch'd the harp to heroes' praise,
But his achievements swell'd the lays?
Even Morag—not a tale of fame
Was hers but closed with Ronald's name.
He came! and all that had been told
Of his high worth seem'd poor and cold,
Tame, lifeless, void of energy,
Unjust to Ronald and to me!"

XL.

"Since then, what thought had Edith's heart
 And gave not plighted love its part!—
 And what requital? cold delay—
 Excuse that shunn'd the spousal day.—
 It dawns, and Ronald is not here!—
 Hunts he Bentalla's nimble deer,
 Or leiters he in secret dell
 To bid some lighter love farewell,
 And swear, that though he may not scorn
 A daughter of the House of Lorn,*
 Yet, when these formal rites are o'er,
 Again they meet, to part no more?"

XII.

"Hush, daughter, hush! thy doubts remove,
 More nobly think of Ronald's love.
 Look, where beneath the castle grey
 His fleet unmoor from Aros bay!
 See'st not each galley's topmast bend,
 As on the yards the sails ascend?
 Hiding the dark-blue land they rise,
 Like the white clouds on April skies;
 The shouting vassals man the oars,
 Behind them sink Mull's mountain shores,
 Onward their merry course they keep,
 Through whistling breeze and foaming deep.
 And mark the headmost, seaward cast,
 Steep to the freshening gale her mast,
 As if she veil'd its banner'd pride,
 To greet afar her Prince's bride!
 Thy Ronald comes, and while in speed
 His galley mates the flying steed,
 He chides her sloth!"—Fair Edith sigh'd,
 Blush'd, sadly smiled, and thus replied:—

XIII.

"Sweet thought, but vain!—No, Morag! mark,
 Type of his course, yon lonely bark,
 That oft hath shifted helm and sail,
 To win its way against the gale.
 Since peep of morn, my vacant eyes
 Have view'd by fits the course she takes;
 Now, though the darkening scud comes on,
 And dawn's fair promises be gone,
 And though the weary crew may see
 Our sheltering haven on their lee,
 Still closer to the rising wind
 They strive her shivering sail to bind,

* Note 7.

Still nearer to the shelves' dread verge
 At every tack her course they urge.
 As if they fear'd Artornish more
 Than adverse winds and breakers' roar.*

xiv.

Sooth spoke the Maid.—Amid the tide
 The skiff she mark'd lay tossing sore,
 And shifted oft her stooping side,
 In weary tack from shore to shore.
 Yet on her destined course no more
 She gain'd, of forward way,
 Than what a minstrel may compare
 To the poor meed which peasants share,
 Who toil the livelong day;
 And such the risk her pilot braves,
 That oft, before she wore,
 Her boltsprit kiss'd the broken waves,
 Where in white foam the ocean raves
 Upon the shelving shore.
 Yet, to their destined purpose true,
 Undaunted toil'd her hardy crew,
 Nor look'd where shelter lay,
 Nor for Artornish Castle drew,
 Nor steer'd for Aros bay.

xv.

Thus while they strove with wind and seas,
 Borne onward by the willing breeze,
 Lord Ronald's fleet swept by,
 Streamer'd with silk, and trick'd with gold,
 Mann'd with the noble and the bold
 Of island chivalry.
 Around their prows the ocean roars,
 And chafes beneath their thousand oars,
 Yet bears them on their way:
 So chafes the war-horse in his might,
 That fieldward bears some valiant knight,
 Champs, till both bit and boss are white,
 But, foaming, must obey.
 On each gay deck they might behold
 Lances of steel and crests of gold.
 And hauberks with their burnish'd fold,
 That shimmer'd fair and free;
 And each proud galley, as she pass'd,
 To the wild cadence of the blast
 Gave wilder minstrelsy.
 Full many a shrill triumphant note
 Saline and Scallastle bade float
 Their misty shores around;

And Morven's echoes answer'd well
 And Duart heard the distant swell
 Come down the darksome Sound.

XVI.

So bore they on with mirth and pride,
 And if that labouring bark they spied,
 'Twas with such idle eye
 As nobles cast on lowly boor,
 When, toiling in his task obscure,
 They pass him careless by.
 Let them sweep on with heedless eyes!
 But, had they known what mighty prize
 In that frail vessel lay,
 The famish'd wolf, that prowls the wold,
 Had scatheless pass'd the unguarded fold,
 Ere, drifting by these galleys bold,
 Unchallenged were her way!
 And thou, Lord Ronald, sweep thou on,
 With mirth, and pride, and minstrel tone!
 But hast thou known who sail'd so nigh,
 Far other glance were in thine eye!
 Far other flush were on thy brow,
 That, shaded by the bonnet, now
 Assumes but ill the blithesome cheer
 Of bridegroom when the bride is near!

XVII.

Yes, sweep they on!—We will not leave,
 For them that triumph, those who grieve.
 With that armada gay
 Be laughter loud and jocund shout,
 And bards to cheer the wassail route,
 With tale, romance, and lay;
 And of wild mirth each clamorous art,
 Which, if it cannot cheer the heart,
 May stupify and stun its smart,
 For one loud busy day.
 Yes, sweep they on!—But with that skiff
 Abides the minstrel tale,
 Where there was dread of surge and cliff,
 Labour that strain'd each sinew stiff,
 And one sad Maiden's wail.

XVIII.

All day with fruitless strife they toil'd,
 With eve the ebbing currents boil'd
 More fierce from strait and lake;
 And midway through the channel met
 Conflicting tides that foam and fret,

And high their mingled billows jet,
 As spears, that, in the battle set,
 Spring upward as they break.
 Then, too, the lights of eve were past,
 And louder sung the western blast
 On rocks of Innismore;
 Rent was the sail, and strain'd the mast,
 And many a leak was gaping fast,
 And the pale steersman stood aghast,
 And gave the conflict o'er.

XIX.

"Twas then that One, whose lofty look
 Nor labour dull'd nor terror shook,
 Thus to the Leader spoke:—
 "Brother, how hopest thou to abide
 The fury of this wilder'd tide,
 Or how avoid the rock's rude side,
 Until the day has broke?
 Didst thou not mark the vessel reel,
 With quivering planks, and groaning keel,
 At the last billow's shock?
 Yet how of better counsel tell,
 Though here thou see'st poor Isabel
 Half dead with want and fear;
 For look on sea, or look on land,
 Or yon dark sky—on every hand
 Despair and death are near.
 For her alone I grieve—on me
 Danger sits light, by land and sea,
 I follow where thou wilt;
 Either to bide the tempest's lour,
 Or wend to yon unfriendly tower,
 Or rush amid their naval power,
 With war-cry wake their wassall-hour,
 And die with hand on hilt."

XX.

That elder Leader's calm reply
 In steady voice was given,
 "In man's most dark extremity
 Oft succour dawns from Heaven.
 Edward, trim thou the shatter'd sail,
 The helm be mine, and down the gale
 Let our free course be driven;
 So shall we 'scape the western bay,
 The hostile fleet, the unequal fray,
 So safely hold our vessel's way
 Beneath the Castle wall;

For if a hope of safety rest,
 'Tis on the sacred name of guest,
 Who seeks for shelter, storm-distress'd,
 Within a chieftain's hall.
 If not—it best beseems our worth,
 Our name, our right, our lofty birth,
 By noble hands to fall."

XXI.

The helm, to his strong arm consign'd,
 Gave the reef'd sail to meet the wind,
 And on her alter'd way,
 Fierce bounding, forward sprung the ship,
 Like greyhound starting from the slip
 To seize his flying prey.
 Awaked before the rushing prow,
 The mimic fires of ocean glow,
 Those lightnings of the wave;*
 Wild sparkles crest the broken tides,
 And, flashing round, the vessel's sides
 With elvish lustre lave,
 While, far behind, their livid light
 To the dark billows of the night
 A gloomy splendour gave,
 It seems as if old Ocean shakes
 From his dark brow the lucid flakes
 In envious pageantry,
 To match the meteor-light that streaks
 Grim Hecla's midnight sky.

XXII.

Nor lack'd they steadier light to keep
 Their course upon the darken'd deep;—
 Artornish, on her frowning steep
 'Twixt cloud and ocean hung,
 Glanced with a thousand lights of glee,
 And landward far, and far to sea,
 Her festal radiance flung.
 By that blithe beacon-light they steer'd,
 Whose lustre mingled well
 With the pale beam that now appear'd
 As the cold moon her head uprear'd
 Above the eastern fell.

XXIII.

Thus guided, on their course they bore,
 Until they near'd the mainland shore,
 When frequent on the hollow blast
 Wild shouts of merriment were cast,

* Note 8.

And wind and wave and sea-birds' cry
 With wassail sounds in concert vie,
 Like funeral shrieks with revelry
 Or like the battle-shout
 By peasants heard from cliffs on high,
 When Triumph, Rage, and Agony,
 Madden the fight and rout.
 Now nearer yet, through mist and storm
 Dimly arose the Castle's form,
 And deepen'd shadow made,
 Far lengthen'd on the main below,
 Where, dancing in reflected glow,
 A hundred torches play'd,
 Spangling the wave with lights as vain
 As pleasures in this vale of pain,
 That dazzle as they fade.

xxiv.

Beneath the Castle's sheltering lee,
 They staid their course in quiet sea;
 Hewn in the rock, a passage there
 Sought the dark fortress by a stair,*
 So strait, so high, so steep,
 With peasant's staff one valiant hand
 Might well the dizzy pass have man'd,
 'Gainst hundreds arm'd with spear and brand,
 And plung'd them in the deep.
 His bugle then the helmsman wound;
 Loud answer'd every echo round,
 From turret, rock, and bay,
 The postern's hinges crash and groan,
 And soon the Warder's cresset shone
 On those rude steps of slippery stone
 To light the upward way.
 "Thrice welcome, holy Sire!" he said;
 "Full long the spousal train have staid,
 And, vex'd at thy delay,
 Fear'd lest, amidst these wildering seas,
 The darksome night and freshening breeze
 Had driven thy bark astray."—

xxv.

"Warder," the young stranger said,
 "Thine erring guess some mirth had made
 In mirthful hour; but nights like these,
 When the rough winds wake western seas,
 Brook not of glee. We crave some aid
 And needful shelter for this maid
 Until the break of day;

* Note 9.

For, to ourselves, the deck's rude plank
 Is easy as the mossy bank
 That's breath'd upon by May.
 And for our storm-toss'd skiff we seek
 Short shelter in this leeward creek,
 Prompt when the dawn the east shall streak,
 Again to bear away."—
 Answered the Warden, "In what name
 Assert ye hospitable claim ?
 Whence come, or whither bound ?
 Hath Erin seen your parting sails,
 Or come ye on Norwegian gales ?
 And seek ye England's fertile vales,
 Or Scotland's mountain ground ?"

XXVI.

"Warriors—for other title none
 For some brief space we list to own,
 Bound by a vow—warriors are we;
 In strife by land and storm by sea,
 We have been known to fame;
 And these brief words have import dear,
 When sounded in a noble ear,
 To harbour safe, and friendly cheer,
 That gives us rightful claim.
 Grant us the trivial boon we seek,
 And we in other realms will speak
 Fair of your courtesy;
 Deny—and be your niggard Hold
 Scorn'd by the noble and the bold,
 Shunn'd by the pilgrim on the wold,
 And wanderer on the lea!"

XXVII.

"Bold stranger, no—'gainst claim like thine,
 No bolt revolves by hand of mine,
 Though urged in tone that more express'd
 A monarch than a suppliant guest.
 Be what you will, Artornish Hall
 On this glad eve is free to all.
 Though ye had drawn a hostile sword
 'Gainst, our ally, great England's Lord,
 Or mail upon your shoulders borne,
 To battle with the Lord of Lorn,
 Or, outlaw'd, dwelt by greenwood tree
 With the fierce Knight of Ellerslie,*

* Sir William Wallace.

Or aided even the murderous strife,
When Comyn fell beneath the knife,
Of that fell homicide The Bruce,
This night had been a term of truce.—
Ho, vassals! give these guests your care,
And show the narrow postern stair."

XXVIII.

To land these two bold brethren leapt,
(The weary crew their vessel kept),
And, lighted by the torches' flare,
That seaward flung their smoky glare,
The younger knight that maiden bare
Half lifeless up the rock;
On his strong shoulder lean'd her head,
And down her long dark tresses shed,
As the wild vine in tendrils spread,
Droops from the mountain oak.
Him follow'd close that elder Lord,
And in his hand a sheathed sword,
Such as few arms could wield;
But when he boun'd him to such task,
Well could it cleave the strongest casque,
And rend the surest shield.

XXIX.

The raised portcullis' arch they pass,
The wicket with its bar of brass,
The entrance long and low,
Flank'd at each turn by loop-holes strait,
Where bowmen might in ambush wait,
(If force or fraud should burst the gate),
To gall an entering foe.
But every jealous post of ward
Was now defenceless and unbarr'd,
And all the passage free
To one low-brow'd and vaulted room,
Where squire and yeoman, page and groom,
Plied their loud revelry.

XXX.

And "Rest ye here," the Warden bade,
"Till to our Lord your suit is said.—
And, comrades, gaze not on the maid,
And on these men who ask our aid,
As if ye ne'er had seen
A damsel tired of midnight bark,
Or wanderers of a moulding stark,
And bearing martial mien."

But not for Eachin's reproof
 Would page or vassal stand aloof,
 But crowded on to stare,
 As men of courtesy untaught,
 Till fiery Edward roughly caught,
 From one, the foremost there,
 His chequer'd plaid, and in its shroud,
 To hide her from the vulgar crowd,
 Involved his sister fair.
 His brother, as the clansman bent
 His sullen brow in discontent,
 Made brief and stern excuse;—
 “Vassal, were thine the cloak of pall
 That decks thy lord in bridal hall,
 ‘Twere honour’d by her use.”

XXXI.

Proud was his tone, but calm; his eye
 Had that compelling dignity,
 His mien that bearing haught and high,
 Which common spirits fear;
 Needed no word nor signal more,
 Nod, wink, and laughter, all were o'er;
 Upon each other back they bore,
 And gazed like startled deer.
 But now appear'd the Seneschal,
 Commission'd by his lord to call
 The strangers to the Baron's hall,
 Where feasted fair and free
 That Island Prince in nuptial tide,
 With Edith there his lovely bride,
 And her bold brother by her side,
 And many a chief, the flower and pride
 Of Western land and sea.

Here pause we, gentles, for a space;
 And, if our tale hath won your grace,
 Grant us brief patience, and again,
 We will renew the minstrel strain.

CANTO SECOND.

I.

FILL the bright goblet, spread the festive board!
 Summon the gay, the noble, and the fair!
 Through the loud hall, in joyous concert pour'd,
 Let mirth and music sound the dirge of Care!
 But ask thou not if Happiness be there,
 If the loud laugh disguise convulsive thro'e,
 Or if the brow the heart's true livery wear;
 Lift not the festal mask!—enough to know,
 No scene of mortal life but teems with mortal woe.

II.

With beakers' clang, with harpers' lay,
 With all that olden time deem'd gay,
 The Island Chieftain feasted high;
 But there was in his troubled eye
 A gloomy fire, and on his brow
 Now sudden flush'd, and faded now,
 Emotions such as draw their birth
 From deeper source than festal mirth.
 By fits he paused, and harper's strain
 And jester's tale went round in vain,
 Or fell but on his idle ear
 Like distant sounds which dreamers hear.
 Then would he rouse him, and employ
 Each art to aid the clamorous joy,
 And call for pledge and lay,
 And, for brief space, of all the crowd,
 As he was loudest of the loud,
 Seem gayest of the gay.

III.

Yet nought amiss the bridal throng
 Mark'd in brief mirth, or musing long;
 The vacant brow, the unlistening ear,
 They gave to thoughts of raptures near,
 And his fierce starts of sudden glee
 Seem'd bursts of bridegroom's ecstasy.
 Nor thus alone misjudged the crowd,
 Since lofty Lorn, suspicious, proud,
 And jealous of his honour'd line,
 And that keen knight, De Argentine,*

* Note 10.

(From England sent on errand high,
 The western league more firm to tie,) Both deem'd in Ronald's mood to find
 A lover's transport-troubled mind.
 But one sad heart, one tearful eye,
 Pierced deeper through the mystery,
 And watch'd, with agony and fear,
 Her wayward bridegroom's varied cheer.

IV.

She watch'd—yet fear'd to meet his glance,
 And he shunn'd hers;—till when by chance
 They met, the point of foeman's lance
 Had given a milder pang!
 Beneath the intolerable smart
 He writh'd;—then sternly mann'd his heart
 To play his hard but destined part,
 And from the table sprang.
 “Fill me the mighty cup!” * he said,
 “Erst own'd by royal Somerled:
 Fill it, till on the studded brim
 In burning gold the bubbles swim,
 And every gem of varied shine
 Glow doubly bright in rosy wine!
 To you, brave Lord, and brother mine,
 Of Lorn, this pledge I drink—
 The Union of our House with thine,
 By this fair bridal-link!”

V.

“Let it pass round!” quoth He of Lorn,
 “And in good time—that winded horn
 Must of the Abbot tell;
 The laggard monk is come at last.”
 Lord Ronald heard the bugle blast,
 And on the floor at random cast,
 The untasted goblet fell.
 But when the Warden in his ear
 Tells other news, his blither cheer
 Returns like sun of May,
 When through a thunder-cloud it beams!—
 Lord of two hundred isles, he seems
 As glad of brief delay,
 As some poor criminal might feel,
 When from the gibbet or the wheel
 Respited for a day.

* Note II.

VI.

"Brother of Lorn," with hurried voice
He said, "and you, fair lords, rejoice!

Here, to augment our glee,
Come wandering knights from travel far,
Well proved, they say, in strife of war,
And tempest on the sea.—

Ho! give them at your board such place
As best their presences may grace,
And bid them welcome free!"

With solemn step, and silver wand,
The Seneschal the presence scann'd
Of these strange guests;* and well he knew
How to assign their rank its due;

For though the costly furs
That erst had deck'd their caps were torn,
And their gay robes were over-worn,

And soil'd their gilded spurs,
Yet such a high commanding grace
Was in their mien and in their face,
As suited best the princely dais;

And royal canopy;
And there he marshall'd them their place,
First of that company.

VII.

Then lords and ladies spake aside,
And angry looks the error chide,
That gave to guests unhamed, unknown,
A place so near their prince's throne;

But Owen Erraught said—

"For forty years a seneschal,
To marshal guests in bower and hall
Has been my honour'd trade.

Worship and mirth to me are known,
By look, by bearing, and by tone,
Not by furr'd robe or broider'd zone;

And 'gainst an oaken bough
I'll gage my silver wand of state,
That these three strangers oft have sate
In higher place than now."

VIII.

"I, too," the aged Ferrand said,

"Am qualified by minstrel trade

Of rank and place to tell;—

Mark'd ye the younger stranger's eye,

My mates, how quick, how keen, how high;

How fierce its flashes fell,

* Note 12.

Glancing among the noble rout
 As if to seek the noblest out,
 Because the owner might not brook
 On any save his peers to look?

And yet it moves me more,
 That steady, calm, majestic brow,
 With which the elder chief even now

Scann'd the gay presence o'er,
 Like being of superior kind,
 In whose high-toned impartial mind
 Degrees of mortal rank and state
 Seem objects of indifferent weight.

The lady too—though, closely tied,
 The mantle veil both face and eye;
 Her motions' grace it could not hide,
 Nor could her form's fair symmetry."

IX.

Suspicious doubt and lordly scorn
 Lour'd on the haughty front of Lotri.
 From underneath his brows of pride,
 The stranger guests he sternly eyed,
 And whisper'd closely what the ear
 Of Argentine alone might hear;

Then question'd, high and brief,
 If, in their voyage, aught they knew
 Of the rebellious Scottish crew,
 Who to Rath-Erin's shelter drew

With Carrick's outlaw'd Chief?*
 And if, their winter's exile o'er,
 They harbour'd still by Ulster's shore,
 Or launch'd their galleys on the main,
 To vex their native land again?

X.

That younger stranger, fierce and high,
 At once confronts the Chieftain's eye

With look of equal scorn;—
 "Of rebels have we nought to show;
 But if of royal Bruce thou'dst know,

I warn thee he has sworn,
 Ere thrice three days shall come and go,
 His banner Scottish winds shall blow,
 Despite each mean or mighty fee,
 From England's every bill and bow,
 To Allaster of Letn."

* Note 13.

Kindled the mountain Chieftain's ire,
 But Ronald quench'd the rising fire:—
 “Brother, it better suits the time
 To chase the night with Ferrand's rhyme,
 Than wake, 'midst mirth and wine, the jars
 That flow from these unhappy wars.”—
 “Content,” said Lorn; and spoke apart
 With Ferrand, master of his art,
 Then whisper'd Argentine,—
 “The lay I named will carry smart
 To these bold strangers' haughty heart,
 If right this guess of mine.”
 He ceased, and it was silence all,
 Until the minstrel waked the hall.

XL.

*The Brooch of Lorn.**

“Whence the brooch of burning gold,
 That clasps the Chieftain's mantle-fold,
 Wrought and chased with rare device.
 Studded fair with gems of price,
 On the varied tartans beaming,
 As, through night's pale rainbow gleaming,
 Fainter now, now seen afar,
 Fitful shines the northern star?

“Gem! ne'er wrought on Highland mountain,
 Did the fairy of the fountain,
 Or the mermaid of the wave,
 Frame thee in some coral cave?
 Did, in Iceland's darksome mine,
 Dwarf's swart hands thy metal twine?
 Or, mortal-moulded, comest thou here,
 From England's love, or France's fear?

XII.

Song continued.

“No!—thy splendours nothing tell
 Foreign art or faery spell.
 Moulded thou for monarch's use,
 By the overweening Bruce,
 When the royal robe he tied
 O'er a heart of wrath and pride;
 Thence in triumph wert thou torn,
 By the victor hand of Lorn!

* Note 15.

“When the gem was won and lost,
Widely was the war-cry toss’d!
Rung aloud Bendouran fell,
Answer’d Douchart’s sounding dell,
Fled the deer from wild Teyndrum,
When the homicide, o’ercome,
Hardly ’scaped with scathe and scorn,
Left the pledge with conquering Lorn!

XIII.

Song concluded.

“Vain was then the Douglas brand,
Vain the Campbell’s vaunted hand,
Vain Kirkpatrick’s bloody dirk,*
Making sure of murder’s work;
Barendown fled fast away,
Fled the fiery De la Haye,†
When this brooch, triumphant borne,
Beam’d upon the breast of Lorn.

“Farthest fled its former Lord,
Left his men to brand and cord,
Bloody brand of Highland steel,
English gibbet, axe, and wheel.
Let him fly from coast to coast,
Dogg’d by Comyn’s vengeful ghost,
While his spoils, in triumph worn,
Long shall grace victorious Lorn!”

XIV.

As glares the tiger on his foes,
Hemm’d in by hunters, spears, and bows,
And, ere he bounds upon the ring,
Selects the object of his spring,—
Now on the Bard, now on his Lord,
So Edward glared and grasp’d his sword—
But stern his brother spoke,—“Be still.
What! art thou yet so wild of will,
After high deeds and sufferings long,
To chafe thee for a menial’s song?—
Well hast thou framed, Old Man, thy strains,‡
To praise the hand that pays thy pains!
Yet something might thy song have told
Of Lorn’s three vassals, true and bold,
Who rent their Lord from Bruce’s hold,
As underneath his knee he lay,
And died to save him in the fray.

* Note 16.

† Note 17.

‡ Note 18.

I've heard the Bruce's cloak and clasp
 Was clenched within their dying grasp,
 What time a hundred foemen more
 Rush'd in, and back the victor bore,
 Long after Lorn had left the strife,
 Full glad to 'scape with limb and life.—
 Enough of this—And, Minstrel, hold,
 As minstrel-hire, this chain of gold,
 For future lays a fair excuse,
 To speak more nobly of the Bruce.”—

XV.

“Now, by Columba’s shrine, I swear;
 And every saint that’s buried there,
 ‘Tis he himself!” Lorn sternly cries,
 “And for my kinsman’s death he dies.”
 As loudly Ronald calls—“Forbear!
 Not in my sight while brand I wear,
 O’ermatch’d by odds, shall warrior fall
 Or blood of stranger stain my hall!
 This ancient fortress of my race
 Shall be misfortune’s resting-place,
 Shelter and shield of the distress’d,
 No slaughter-house for shipwreck’d guests.”
 “Talk not to me,” fierce Lorn replied,
 “Of odds or match!—when Comyn dieth,
 Three daggers clash’d within his side!
 Talk not to me of sheltering hall,
 The Church of God saw Comyn fall!
 On God’s own altar stream’d his blood,
 While o’er my prostrate kinsman stood
 The ruthless murderer—e’en as now—
 With arm’d hand and scornful brow.—
 Up, all who love me! blow on blow!
 And lay the outlaw’d felons low!”

XVI.

Then up sprang many a mainland Lord,
 Obedient to their Chieftain’s word.
 Barcaldine’s arm is high in air,
 And Kinloch-Alline’s blade is bare,
 Black Murthok’s dirk has left its sheath,
 And clenched is Dermid’s hand of death.
 Their mutter’d threats of vengeance swell
 Into a wild and warlike yell;
 Onward they press with weapons high;
 The affrighted females shriek and fly;
 And, Scotland, then thy brightest ray
 Had darken’d ere its noon of day,

But every chief of birth and fame,
That from the Isles of Ocean came,
At Ronald's side that hour withstood
Fierce Lorn's relentless thirst for blood.

XVII.

Brave Torquil from Dunvegan high,
Lord of the misty hills of Skye,
Mac-Niel, wild Bara's ancient thane,
Duart, of bold Clan-Gillian's strain,
Fergus, of Canna's castled bay,
Mac-Duffith, Lord of Colonsay,
Soon as they saw the broadswords glance,
With ready weapons rose at once,
More prompt, that many an ancient feud,
Full oft suppress'd, full oft renew'd,
Glow'd 'twixt the chieftains of Argyle,
And many a lord of ocean's isle.
Wild was the scene—each sword was bare,
Back stream'd each chieftain's shaggy hair,
In gloomy opposition set,
Eyes, hands, and brandish'd weapons met;
Blew gleaming o'er the social board,
Flash'd to the torches many a sword;
And soon those bridal lights may shine
On purple blood for rosy wine;

XVIII.

While thus for blows and death prepared,
Each heart was up, each weapon bated,
Each foot advanced,—a surly pause
Still reverenced hospitable laws.
All menaced violence, but alike
Reluctant each the first to strike.
(For aye accursed in minstrel line
Is he who brawls 'mid song and wine.)
And, match'd in numbers and in might,
Doubtful and desperate seem'd the fight.
Thus threat and murmur died away,
Till on the crowded hall there lay
Such silence, as the deadly still,
Ere bursts the thunder on the hill.
With blade advanced, each Chieftain bold
Show'd like the Sworder's form of old,
As wanting still the torch of life.
To wake the marble into strife.

XIX.

That awful pause the stranger maid,
 And Edith, seized to pray for aid.
 As to De Argentine she clung,
 Away her veil the stranger flung,
 And, lovely 'mid her wild despair,
 Fast stream'd her eyes, wide flow'd her hair;—
 “O thou, of knighthood once the flower,
 Sure refuge in distressful hour,
 Thou, who in Judah well hast fought
 For our dear faith, and oft has sought
 Renown in knightly exercise,
 When this poor hand has dealt the prize,
 Say, can thy soul of honour brook
 On the unequal strife to look,
 When, butcher'd thus in peaceful hall.
 Those once thy friends, my brethren, fall!”
 To Argentine she turn'd her word,
 But her eye sought the Island Lord.
 A flush like evening's setting flame
 Glow'd on his cheek; his hardy frame,
 As with a brief convulsion, shook:
 With hurried voice and eager look,—
 “Fear not,” he said, “my Isabel!
 What said I—Edith!—all is well—
 Nay, fear not—I will well provide
 The safety of my lovely bride—
 My bride?”—but there the accents clung
 In tremor to his faltering tongue.

XL.

Now rose De Argentine, to claim
 The prisoners in his sovereign's name,
 To England's crown, who, vassals sworn,
 'Gainst their liege lord had weapon borne—
 (Such speech, I ween, was but to hide
 His care their safety to provide;
 For knight more true in thought and deed
 Than Argentine ne'er spurr'd a steed)—
 And Ronald, who his meaning guess'd,
 Seem'd half to sanction the request.
 This purpose fiery Torquil broke:—
 “Somewhat we've heard of England's yoke,”
 He said, “and in our islands, Fame
 Hath whisper'd of a lawful claim,
 That calls the Bruce fair Scotland's Lord,
 Though dispossess'd by foreign sword.
 This craves reflection—but though right
 And just the charge of England's Knight,

Let England's crown her rebels seize
 Where she has power;—in towers like these,
 'Midst Scottish Chieftains summon'd here
 To bridal mirth and bridal cheer,
 Be sure, with no consent of mine,
 Shall either Lorn or Argentine
 With chains or violence, in our sight,
 Oppress a brave and banish'd Knight."

XXI.

Then waked the wild debate again,
 With brawling threat and clamour vain.
 Vassals and menials, thronging in,
 Lent their brute rage to swell the din;
 When, far and wide, a bugle-clang
 From the dark ocean upward rang.
 "The Abbot comes!" they cry at once,
 "The holy man, whose favour'd glance
 Hath sainted visions known;
 Angels have met him on the way,
 Beside the blessed martyr's bay,
 And by Columba's stone.
 His monks have heard their hymnings high
 Sound from the summit of Dun-Y,
 To cheer his penance lone,
 When at each cross, on girth and wold,
 (Their number thrice a hundred-fold),
 His prayer he made, his beads he told,
 With Aves many a one—
 He comes our feuds to reconcile,
 A sainted man from sainted isle;
 We will his holy doom abide,
 The Abbot shall our strife decide."

XXII.

Scarcely this fair accord was o'er,
 When through the wide revolving door
 The black-stol'd brethren wind;
 Twelve sandall'd monks, who relics bore,
 With many a torch-bearer before,
 And many a cross behind.
 Then sunk each fierce uplifted hand,
 And dagger bright and flashing brand
 Dropped swiftly at the sight;
 They vanish'd from the Churchman's eye,
 As shooting stars, that glance and die,
 Dart from the vault of night.

XXIII.

The Abbot on the threshold stood,
 And in his hand the holy rood;
 Back on his shoulders flow'd his hood,
 The torch's glaring ray
 Show'd in its red and flashing light,
 His wither'd cheek and amice white,
 His blue eye glistening cold and bright,
 His tresses scant and gray.
 "Fair Lords," he said, "Our Lady's love,
 And peace be with you from above,
 And Benedicite!—
 —But what means this?—no peace is here!
 Do dirks unsheathed suit bridal cheer?
 Or are these naked brands
 A seemly show for Churchman's sight,
 When he comes summon'd to unite
 Betrothed hearts and hands?"

XXIV.

Then, cloaking hate with fiery zeal,
 Proud Lorn first answer'd the appeal;—
 "Thou comest, O holy Man,
 True sons of blessed church to greet,
 But little deeming here to meet
 A wretch, beneath the ban
 Of Pope and Church, for murder done
 Even on the sacred altar-stone—
 Well may'st thou wonder we should know
 Such miscreant here, nor lay him low,
 Or dream of greeting, peace, or truce,
 With excommunicated Bruce!
 Yet well I grant to end debate,
 Thy sainted voice decide his fate."

XXV.

Then Ronald pled the stranger's cause,
 And knighthood's oath and honour's laws;
 And Isabel, on bended knee,
 Brought pray'rs and tears to back the plea:
 And Edith lent her generous aid,
 And wept, and Lorn for mercy pray'd.
 "Hence," he exclaim'd, "degenerate maid!
 Was't not enough, to Ronald's bower*
 I brought thee, like a paramour,
 Or bond-maid at her master's gate,
 His careless cold approach to wait?—

* Note 19.

But the bold Lord of Cumberland,
The gallant Clifford, seeks thy hand;
His it shall be—Nay, no reply!
Hence! till those rebel eyes be dry,”
With grief the Abbot heard and saw,
Yet nought relax’d his brow of awe.

XXVI.

Then Argentine, in England’s name,
So highly urged his sovereign’s claim,
He wak’d a spark, that, long suppress’d,
Had smoulder’d in Lord Ronald’s breast;
And now, as from the flint the fire,
Flash’d forth at once his generous ire,
“Enough of noble blood,” he said,
“By English Edward had been shed,
Since matchless Wallace first had been *
In mock’ry crown’d with wreaths of green,
And done to death by felon hand,
For guarding well his father’s land.
Where’s Nigel Bruce ? and De la Haye, +
And valiant Seton—where are they ?
Where Somerville, the kind and free ?
And Fraser, flower of chivalry ?
Have they not been on gibbet bound,
Their quarters flung to hawk and hound,
And hold we here a cold debate,
To yield more victims to their fate ?
What ! can the English Leopard’s mood
Never be gorged with Northern blood ?
Was not the life of Athole shed, †
To soothe the tyrant’s sicken’d bed ?
And must his word, till dying day,
Be nought but quarter, hang, and slay !—§
Thou frown’st, De Argentine,—My gage
Is prompt to prove the strife I wage.”—

XXVII.

“Nor deem,” said stout Dunvegan’s knight,
“That thou shalt brave alone the fight!
By saints of isle and mainland both,
By Woden wild (my grandsire’s oath), ||
Let Rome and England do their worst,
Howe’er attainted or accurs’d,
If Bruce shall e’er find friends again,
Once more to brave a battle-plain,
If Douglas couch again his lance,
Or Randolph dare another chance,

* Note 20.

† Note 21.

‡ Note 22.

§ Note 23.

|| Note 24.

Old Torquil will not be to lack
 With twice a thousand at his back.—
 Nay, chafe not at my bearing bold,
 Good Abbot! for thou know'st of old,
 Torquil's rude thought and stubborn will
 Smack of the wild Norwegian still;
 Nor will I barter Freedom's cause
 For England's wealth, or Rome's applause.”

XXVIII.

The Abbot seem'd with eye severe
 The hardy Chieftain's speech to hear;
 Then on King Robert turn'd the Monk,
 But twice his courage came and sunk,
 Confronted with the hero's look;
 Twice fell his eye, his accents shook;
 At length, resolved in tone and brow,
 Sternly he question'd him—“ And thou,
 Unhappy! what hast thou to plead,
 Why I denounce not on thy deed
 That awful doom which canons tell
 Shuts paradise, and opens hell;
 Anathema of power so dread,
 It blends the living with the dead,
 Bids each good angel soar away,
 And every ill one claim his prey;
 Expels thee from the church's care,*
 And deafens Heaven against thy prayer;
 Arms every hand against thy life,
 Bans all who aid thee in the strife,
 Nay, each whose succour, cold and scant,
 With meanest alms relieves thy want;
 Haunts thee while living,—and, when dead,
 Dwells on thy yet devoted head,
 Rends Honour's scutcheon from thy hearse,
 Still o'er thy bier the holy verse,
 And spurns thy corpse from hallow'd ground,
 Flung like vile carrion to the hound;
 Such is the dire and desperate doom
 For sacrilege, decreed by Rome;
 And such the well-deserved meed
 Of thiné unhallow'd, ruthless deed.”—

XXIX.

“ Abbot!” the Bruce replied, “ thy charge
 It boots not to dispute at large.
 This much, how'ev'r, I bid thee know,
 No selfish vengeance dealt the blow,
 For Comyn died his country's foe.

* Note 25.

Nor blame I friends whose ill-timed speed
 Fulfill'd by soon-repent'd deed,
 Nor censure those from whose stern tongue
 The dire anathema has rung.
 I only blame mine own wild ire,
 By Scotland's wrongs incensed to fire.
 Heaven knows my purpose to atone,
 Far as I may, the evil done,
 And hears a penitent's appeal
 From papal curse and prelate's zeal.
 My first and dearest task achieved,
 Fair Scotland from her thrall relieved,
 Shall many a priest in cope and stole
 Say requiem for Red Comyn's soul,
 While I the blessed cross advance,*
 And expiate this unhappy chance
 In Palestine, with sword and lance.
 But, while content the Church should know
 My conscience owns the debt I owe,
 Unto De Argentine and Lorn
 The name of traitor I return,
 Bid them defiance stern and high,
 And give them in their throats the lie!
 These brief words spoke, I speak no more.
 Do what thou wilt; my shrift is o'er."

XXX.

Like man by prodigy amazed,
 Upon the King the Abbot gazed;
 Then o'er his pallid features glance,
 Convulsions of ecstatic trance.
 His breathing came more thick and fast,
 And from his pale blue eyes were cast
 Strange rays of wild and wandering light;
 Uprise his locks of silver white,
 Flush'd is his brow, through every vein
 In azure tide the currents strain,
 And undistinguished accents broke
 The awful silence ere he spoke.

XXXI.

"De Bruce! I rose with purpose dread †
 To speak my curse upon thy head,
 And give thee as an outcast o'er
 To him who burns to shed thy gore;—
 But, like the Midianite of old,
 Who stood on Zophim, Heaven-controll'd,‡

* Note 26.

† Note 27.

‡ See the Book of NUMBERS, chap. xxiii. and xxiv.

I feel within mine aged breast
A power that will not be repress'd.
It prompts my voice, it swells my veins,
It burns, it maddens, it constrains!—
De Bruce, thy sacrilegious blow
Hath at God's altar slain thy foe:
O'ermaster'd yet by high behest,
I bless thee, and thou shalt be bless'd!"
He spoke, and o'er the astonish'd throng
Was silence, awful, deep, and long.

XXXII.

Again that light has fired his eye,
Again his form swells bold and high,
The broken voice of age is gone,
'Tis vigorous manhood's lofty tone:--
"Thrice vanquish'd on the battle-plain,
Thy followers slaughter'd, fled, or ta'en,
A hunted wanderer on the wild,*
On foreign shores a man exiled,
Disown'd, deserted, and distress'd,
I bless thee, and thou shalt be bless'd!
Bless'd in the hall and in the field,
Under the mantle as the shield.
Avenger of thy country's shame,
Restorer of her injured fame,
Bless'd in thy sceptre and thy sword,
De Bruce, fair Scotland's rightful Lord,
Bless'd in thy deeds and in thy fame,
What lengthen'd honours wait thy name!
In distant ages, sire to son
Shall tell thy tale of freedom won,
And teach his infants, in the use
Of earliest speech, to falter Bruce.
Go, then, triumphant! sweep along
Thy course, the theme of many a song!
The Power, whose dictates swell my breast,
Hath bless'd thee, and thou shalt be bless'd!—
Enough—my short lived strength decays,
And sinks the momentary blaze.—
Heaven hath our destined purpose broke,
Not here must nuptial vow be spoke;
Brethren, our errand hero is o'er,
Our task discharged.—Unmoor, unmoor!"—
His priests received the exhausted Monk,
As breathless in their arms he sunk.
Punctual his orders to obey,
The train refused all longer stay,
Embark'd, raised sail, and bore away.

* Note 28.

CANTO THIRD.

I.

Hast thou not mark'd, when o'er thy startled head
 Sudden and deep the thunder-peal has roll'd,
 How when its echoes fell, a silence dead
 Sunk oh the wood, the meadow, and the wold;
 The rye-grass shakes not on the sod-built fold,
 The rustling aspen's leaves are mute and still,
 The wall-flower waves not on the ruin'd hold,
 Till, murmuring distant first, then near and shrill,
 The savage whirlwind wakes, and sweeps the groaning hill.

II.

Artornish! such a silence sunk
 Upon thy halls, when that grey Monk
 His prophet-speech had spoke;
 And his obedient brethren's sail
 Was stretch'd to meet the southern gale
 Before a whisper woke.
 Then murmuring sounds of doubt and fear,
 Close pour'd in many an anxious ear,
 The solemn stillness broke;
 And still they gazed with eager guess,
 Where, in an oriel's deep recess,
 The Island Prince seem'd bent to press
 What Lorn, by his impatient cheer,
 And gesture fierce, scarce deign'd to hear.

III.

Starting at length with frowning look,
 His hand he clench'd, his head he shook,
 And sternly flung apart;—
 “And deem'st thou me so mean of mood,
 As to forget the mortal feud,
 And clasp the hand with blood imbrued
 From my dear Kinsman's heart?
 Is this thy rede?—a due return
 For ancient league and friendship sworn!
 But well our mountain proverb shows
 The faith of Islesmen ebbs and flows.
 Be it even so—believe, ere long,
 He that now bears shall wreak the wrong.—
 Call Edith—call the Maid of Lorn!
 My sister, slaves!—for further scorn,

Be sure nor she nor I will stay.—
 Away, De Argentine, away!—
 We nor ally nor brother know,
 In Bruce's friend, or England's foe."

IV.

But who the Chieftain's rage can tell,
 When, sought from lowest dungeon cell
 To highest tower the castle round,
 No Lady Edith was there found!
 He shouted—"Falsehood!—treachery!—
 Revenge and blood!—a lordly meed
 To him that will avenge the deed!
 A Baron's lands!"—His frantic mood
 Was scarcely by the news withstood,
 That Morag shared his sister's flight,
 And that, in hurry of the night,
 'Scaped noteless, and without remark,
 Two strangers sought the Abbot's bark.—
 "Man every galley!—fly—pursue!
 The priest his treachery shall rue!
 Ay, and the time shall quickly come,
 When we shall hear the thanks that Rome
 Will pay his feigned prophecy!"
 Such was fierce Lorn's indignant cry;
 And Cormac Doil in haste obey'd,
 Hoisted his sail, his anchor weigh'd,
 (For, glad of each pretext for spoil,
 A pirate sworn was Cormac Doil.)—*
 But others, lingering, spoke apart,—
 "The maid has given her maiden heart
 To Ronald of the Isles,
 And, fearful lest her brother's word
 Bestow her on that English Lord,
 She seeks Iona's piles,
 And wisely deems it best to dwell
 A votaress in the holy cell,
 Until these feuds so fierce and fell
 The Abbot reconciles."

V.

As, impotent of ire, the hall
 Echoed to Lorn's impatient call—
 "My, horse, my mantle, and my train!
 Let none who honours Lorn remain!"—
 Courteous, but stern, a bold request
 To Bruce De Argentine express'd:—
 "Lord Earl," he said,—"I cannot chuse
 But yield such title to the Bruce,

* Note 29.

Though name and earldom both are gone,
 Since he braced rebel's armour on—
 But, Earl or Serf—rude phrase was thine
 Of late, and launch'd at Argentine;
 Such as compels me to demand
 Redress of honour at thy hand.
 We need not to each other tell,
 That both can wield their weapons well;
 Then do me but the soldier grace,
 This glove upon thy helm to place
 Where we may meet in fight;
 And I will say, as still I've said,
 Though by ambition far misled,
 Thou art a noble knight."

VI.

"And I," the princely Bruce replied,
 "Might term it stain on knighthood's pride,
 That the bright sword of Argentine
 Should in a tyrant's quarrel shine;
 But, for your brave request,
 Be sure the honour'd pledge you gave
 In every battle-field shall wave
 Upon my helmet-crest;
 Believe, that if my hasty tongue
 Hath done thine honour causeless wrong,
 It shall be well redress'd.
 Not dearer to my soul was glove,
 Bestow'd in youth by lady's love,
 Than this which thou hast given!
 Thus, then, my noble foe I greet;
 Health and high fortune till we meet,
 And then—what pleases Heaven."

VII.

Thus parted they—for now, with sound
 Like waves roll'd back from rocky ground,
 The friends of Lorn retire;
 Each mainland chieftain, with his train,
 Draws to his mountain towers again,
 Pondering how mortal schemes prove vain,
 And mortal hopes expire.
 But through the castle double guard,
 By Ronald's charge, kept wakeful ward,
 Wicket and gate were trebly barr'd,
 By beam and bolt and chain;
 Then of the guests, in courteous sort,
 He pray'd excuse for mirth broke short,
 And bade them in Artornish fort
 In confidence remain.

Now torch and menial tendance led
Chieftain and knight to bower and bed,
And beads were told, and Aves said,

And soon they sunk away
Into such sleep as wont to shed
Oblivion on the weary head,
After a toilsome day,

VIII.

But soon uproused, the Monarch cried
To Edward slumbering by his side,

“Awake, or sleep for aye!

Even now there jarr'd a secret door—
A taper-light gleams on the floor—

Up, Edward! up, I say!
Some one glides in like midnight ghost
Nay, strike not! 'tis our noble Host.”

Advancing then his taper's flame,
Ronald stepped forth, and with him came

Dunvegan's chief—each bent the knee
To Bruce in sign of fealty,
And proffer'd him his sword,
And hail'd him, in a monarch's style,

As king of mainland and of isle,
And Scotland's rightful lord.

“And O,” said Ronald, “Own'd of Heaven!
Say, is my erring youth forgiven,
By falsehoods hearts from duty driven,

Who rebel falchian drew,
Yet ever to thy deeds of fume,
Even while I strove against thy claim,

Paid homage just and true?”—
“Alas! dear youth, the unhappy time,”*

Answer'd the Bruce, “must bear the crime,

Since, guiltier far than you,
Even I—he paused; for Falkirk's woes,
Upon his conscious soul arose.
The Chieftain to his breast he press'd,

And in a sigh conceal'd the rest.

IX.

They proffer'd aid, by arms and might,
To reposess him in his right;
But well their counsels must be weigh'd,
Ere banners raised and musters made,
For English hire and Lorn's intrigues
Bound many chiefs in southern leagues.

* Note 30.

In answer, Bruce his purpose bold
 To his new vassals frankly told:—
 “The winter worn in exile o'er,
 I long'd for Carrick's kindred shore.
 I thought upon my native Ayr,
 And long'd to see the burly fare
 That Clifford makes, whose lordly call
 Now echoes through my father's hall.
 But first my course to Arran led,
 Where valiant Lennox gathers head,
 And on the sea, by tempest toss'd,
 Our barks dispersed, our purpose cross'd,
 Mine own, a hostile sail to shun,
 Far from her destin'd course had run,
 When that wise will, which masters ours,
 Compell'd us to your friendly towers.”

X.

Then Torquil spoke:—“The time craves speed!
 We must not linger in our deed,
 But instant pray our Sovereign Liege,
 To shun the perils of a siege.
 The vengeful Lorn, with all his powers,
 Lies but too near Artornish towers,
 And England's light-arm'd vessels ride,
 Not distant far, the waves of Clyde.
 Prompt at these tidings to unmoor,
 And sweep each strait, and guard each shore,
 Then, till this fresh alarm pass by,
 Secret and safe my liege must lie
 In the far bounds of friendly Skye,
 Torquil thy pilot and thy guide.”—
 “Not so, brave Chieftain,” Ronald cried;
 “Myself will on my Sovereign wait.
 And raise in arms the men of Sleate,
 Whilst thou, renown'd where chiefs debate,
 Shalt sway their souls by council sage,
 And awe them by thy locks of age.”—
 —“And if my words in weight shall fail,
 This ponderous sword shall turn the scale.”

XL

“The scheme,” said Bruce, “contents me well;
 Meantime, 'twere best that Isabel,
 For safety, with my bark and crew,
 Again to friendly Erin drew.
 There Edward, too, shall with her wend,
 In need to cheer her and defend,
 And muster up each scatter'd friend.”—

Here seem'd it as Lord Ronald's ear
 Would other counsel gladlier hear;
 But, all achieved as soon as plann'd,
 Both barks, in secret, arm'd and mann'd,
 From out the haven bore;
 On different voyage forth they ply,
 This for the coast of winged Skye,
 And that for Erin's shore.

XII.

With Bruce and Ronald bides the tale.—
 To favouring winds they gave the sail,
 Till Mull's dark headlands scarce they knew,
 And Ardnamurchan's hills were blue.
 But then the squalls blew close and hard,
 And, fain to strike the galley's yard,
 And take them to the oar,
 With these rude seas, in weary plight,
 They strove the livelong day and night,
 Nor till the dawning had a sight
 Of Skye's romantic shore.
 Where Coolin stoops him to the west,
 They saw upon his shiver'd crest
 The sun's arising gleam;
 But such the labour and delay,
 Ere they were moor'd in Scavigh bay,
 (For calmer Heaven compell'd to stay,)
 He shot a western beam.
 Then Ronald said, "If true mine eye,
 These are the savage wilds that lie *
 North of Strathnardill and Dunskye;
 No human foot comes here,
 And, since these adverse breezes blow,
 If my good Liege love hunter's bow,
 What hinders that on land we go,
 And strike a mountain deer?
 Allan, my page, shall with us wend,
 A bow full deftly can he bend,
 And, if we meet a herd, may send
 A shaft shall mend our cheer."
 Then each took bow and bolts in hand,
 Their row-boat launch'd and leapt to land,
 And left their skiff and train,
 Where a wild stream with headlong shock,
 Came brawling down its bed of rock,
 To mingle with the main.

* Note 31.

XIII.

A while their route they silent made,
 As men who stalk for mountain-deer,
 Till the good Bruce to Ronald said,—
 “Saint Mary! what a scene is here!
 I've traversed many a mountain-strand,
 Abroad and in my native land,
 And it has been my lot to tread
 Where safety more than pleasure led;
 Thus, many a waste I've wander'd o'er,
 Clombe many a crag, cross'd many a moor,
 But, by my halidome,
 A scene so rude, so wild as this,
 Yet so sublime in barrenness,
 Ne'er did my wandering footsteps press,
 Where'er I happ'd to roam.”

XIV.

No marvel thus the Monarch spake;
 For rarely human eye has known
 A scene so stern as that dread lake,
 With its dark ledge of barren stone.
 Seems that primeval earthquake's sway
 Hath rent a strange and shatter'd way
 Through the rude bosom of the hill,
 And that each naked precipice,
 Sable ravine, and dark abyss,
 Tells of the outrage still.
 The wildest glen, but this, can show
 Some touch of Nature's genial glow;
 On high Benmore green mosses grow,
 And heath-bells bud in deep Glencroe,
 And copse on Crughan-Ben;
 But here,—above, around, below,
 On mountain or in glen,
 Nor tree, nor shrub, nor plant, nor flower,
 Nor aught of vegetative power,
 The weary eye may ken.
 For all is rocks at random thrown,
 Black waves, bare crags, and banks of stone,
 As if were here denied.
 The summer sun, the spring's sweet due,
 That clothe with many a varied hue
 The bleakest mountain-side.

XV.

And wilder, forward as they wound,
 Were the proud cliffs and lake profound.

Huge terraces of granite black
Afforded rude and cumber'd track;
For from the mountain hoar,
Hurl'd headlong in some night of fear,
When yell'd the wolf and fled the deer,
Loose crags had toppled o'er;
And some, chance-poised and balanced, lay,
So that a stripling arm might sway
A mass no host could raise,
In Nature's rage at random thrown,
Yet trembling like the Druid's stone
On its precarious base.
The evening mists, with ceaseless change,
Now clothed the mountains' lofty range,
Now left their foreheads bare,
And round the skirts their mantle furl'd,
Or on the sable waters curl'd,
Or on the eddying breezes whirl'd,
Dispersed in middle air.
And oft, condensed, at once they lower,
When, brief and fierce, the mountain shower
Pours like a torrent down,
And when return the sun's glad beams,
Whiten'd with foam a thousand streams
Leap from the mountain's crown.

xvi.

"This lake," said Bruce, "whose barriers drear
Are precipices sharp and sheer,
Yielding no track for goat or deer,
Save the black shelves we tread,
How term you its dark waves? and how
Yon northern mountain's pathless brow,
And yonder peak of dread,
That to the evening sun uplifts
The griesly gulfs and slaty rifts,
Which seam its shiver'd head?"—
"Coriskin call the dark lake's name,
Coolin the ridge, as bards proclaim,
From old Cuchullin, chief of fame.
But bards, familiar in our isles
Rather with Nature's frowns than smiles,
Full oft their careless humours please
By sportive names from scenes like these.
I would old Torquil were to show
His maidens with their breasts of snow,
Or that my noble Liege were nigh
To hear his Nurse sing lullaby!

(The Maids—tall cliffs with breakers white,
 The Nurse—a torrent's roaring might),
 Or that your eye could see the mood
 Of Corryvreckin's whirlpool rude,
 When dons the Hag her whiten'd hood—
 'Tis thus our isleman's fancy frames,
 For scenes so stern, fantastic names."

XVII.

Answer'd the Bruce, "And musing mind
 Might here a graver moral find.
 These mighty cliffs, that heave on high
 Their naked brows to middle sky,
 Indifferent to the sun or snow,
 Where nought can fade, and nought can blow,
 May they not mark a Monarch's fate,—
 Raised high 'mid storms of strife and state,
 Beyond life's lowlier pleasures placed,
 His soul a rock, his heart a waste?
 O'er hope and love and fear aloft
 High rears his crown'd head—But soft!
 Look, underneath yon jutting crag
 Are hunters and a slaughter'd stag.
 Who may they be? But late you said
 No steps these desert regions tread?"—

XVIII.

"So said I—and believed in sooth,"
 Ronald replied, "I spoke the truth.
 Yet now I spy, by yonder stone,
 Five men—they mark us, and come on;
 And by their badge on bonnet borne,
 I guess them of the land of Lorn,
 Foes to my liege.—"So let it be;
 I've faced worse odds than five to three—
 —But the poor page can little aid;
 Then be our battle thus array'd,
 If our free passage they contest;
 Cope thou with two, I'll match the rest."—
 "Not so, my Liege—for, by my life,
 This sword shall meet the treble strife;
 My strength, my skill in arms, more small,
 And less the loss should Ronald fall.
 But islesmen soon to soldiers grow,—
 Allan has sword as well as bow,
 And were my Monarch's order given,
 Two shafts should make our number even."—

"No! not to save my life!" he said;
 "Enough of blood rests on my head,
 Too rashly spill'd—we soon shall know.
 Whether they came as friend or foe."

XIX.

Nigh came the strangers, and more nigh;—
 Still less they pleased the Monarch's eye.
 Men were they all of evil mien,*
 Down-look'd, unwilling to be seen;
 They mov'd with half-resolved pace,
 And bent on earth each gloomy face.
 The foremost two were fair arrayed,
 With brogue and bonnet, trews and plaid,
 And bore the arms of mountaineers,
 Daggers and broadswords, bows and spears.
 The three, that lagg'd small space behind,
 Seem'd serfs of more degraded kind;
 Goat-skins or deer-hides o'er them cast,
 Made a rude fence against the blast;
 Their arms and feet and heads were bare,
 Matted their beards, unshorn their hair;
 For arms, the caitiffs bore in hand,
 A club, an axe, a rusty brand.

XX.

Onward still mute they kept the track;—
 "Tell who ye be, or else stand back,"
 Said Bruce; "In deserts when they meet,
 Men pass not as in peaceful street."
 Still, at his stern command, they stood,
 And proffer'd greeting brief and rude,
 But acted courtesy so ill,
 As seem'd of fear, and not of will.
 "Wanderers we are, as you may be;
 Men hither driven by wind and sea,
 Who, if you list to taste our cheer,
 Will share with you this fallow deer."—
 "If from the sea, where lies your bark?"
 "Ten fathom deep in ocean dark!
 Wreck'd yesternight: but we are men,
 Who little sense of peril ken.
 The shades come down—the day is shut—
 Will you go with us to our hut?"—
 "Our vessel waits us in the bay;
 Thanks for your proffer—have good-day."

* Note 32.

"Was that your galley, then, which rode
Not far from shore when evening glow'd?"
"It was."—"Then spare your needless pain,
There will she now be sought in vain.
We saw her from the mountain head,
When, with St George's blazon red
A southern vessel bore in sight,
And yours raised sail, and took to flight."

XXI.

"Now, by the rood, unwelcome news!"
Thus with Lord Ronald communed Bruce:
"Nor rests there light enough to show
If this their tale be true or no.
The men seem bred of churlish kind,
Yet mellow nuts have hardest rind;
We will go with them—food and fire
And sheltering roof our wants require.
Sure guard 'gainst treachery will we keep,
And watch by turns our comrades' sleep.—
Good fellows, thanks; your guests we'll be.
And well will pay the courtesy.
Come, lead us where your lodging lies,—
—Nay, soft! we mix not companies.—
Show us the path o'er crag and stone,
And we will follow you;—lead on."

XXII.

They reach'd the dreary cabin, made
Of sails against a rock display'd,
And there, on entering found
A slender boy, whose form and mien
Ill suited with such savage scene,
In cap and cloak of velvet green,
Low seated on the ground.
His garb was such as minstrels wear,
Dark was his hue, and dark his hair,
His youthful cheek was marr'd by care,
His eyes in sorrow drown'd.
"Whence this poor boy?"—As Ronald spoke,
The voice his trance of anguish broke;
As if awaked from ghastly dream,
He raised his head with start and scream,
And wildly gazed around;
Then to the wall his face he turn'd,
And his dark neck with blushes burn'd.

XXIII.

"Whose is the boy?" again he said.
"By chance of war our captive made;

He may be yours, if you should hold
 That music has more charms than gold;
 For, though from earliest childhood mute,
 The lad can deftly touch the lute,
 And on the rote and viol play,
 And well can drive the time away
 For those who love such glee;
 For me, the favouring breeze, when loud
 It pipes upon the galley's shroud,
 Makes blither melody."—
"Hath he, then, sense of spoken scold?"—
 "Aye; so his mother bade us know,
 A crone in our late shipwreck drown'd,
 And hence the silly stripling's wot.
 More of the youth I cannot say,
 Our captive but since yesterday;
 When wind and weather wax'd so grim,
 We little listed think of him.—
 But why waste time in idle words?
 Sit to your cheer—unbelt your swords."
 Sudden the captive turn'd his head,
 And one quick glance to Ronald sped.
 It was a keen and warning look,
 And well the Chief the signal took.

XXIV.

"Kind host," he said, "our needs require
 A separate board and separate fire;
 For know, that on a pilgrimage
 Wend I, my comrade, and this page.
 And, sworn to vigil and to fast,
 Long as this hallow'd task shall last,
 We never doff the plaid or sword,
 Or feast us at a stranger's board;
 And never share one common sleep,
 But one must still his vigil keep.
 Thus, for our separate use, good friend,
 We'll hold this hut's remoter end."—
 "A churlish vow," the elder said,
 "And hard, methinks, to be obey'd.
 How say you, if, to wreak the scorn
 That pays our kindness harsh return,
 We should refuse to share our meal?"—
 "Then say we, that our swords are steel!
 And our vow binds us not to fast,
 Where gold or force may buy repast."—
 Their host's dark brow grew keen and fell,
 His teeth are clench'd, his features swell;

Yet sunk the felon's moody ire
 Before Lord Ronald's glance of fire;
 Nor could his craven courage brook
 The monarch's calm and dauntless look,
 With laugh constrain'd—"Let every man
 Follow the fashion of his clan!
 Each to his separate quarters keep,
 And feed or fast, or wake or sleep."

XXV.

Their fire at separate distance burns,
 By turns they eat, keep guard by turns;
 For evil seem'd that old man's eye,
 Dark and designing, fierce yet shy.
 Still he avoided forward look,
 But slow, and circumspectly took
 A circling, never-ceasing glance,
 By doubt and cunning mark'd at once;
 Which shot a mischief-boding ray,
 From under eyebrows shagg'd and grey.
 The younger, too, who seem'd his son,
 Had that dark look the timid shun;
 The half-clad serfs behind them sate,
 And scowl'd a glare 'twixt fear and hate—
 Till all, as darkness onward crept,
 Couch'd down, and seem'd to sleep, or slept.
 Nor he, that boy, whose powerless tongue
 Must trust his eyes to wail his wrong,
 A longer watch of sorrow made,
 But stretch'd his limbs to slumber laid.

XXVI.

Not in his dangerous host confides
 The King; but wary watch provides.
 Ronald keeps ward till midnight past;
 Then wakes the King, young Allan last;
 Thus rank'd, to give the youthful page
 The rest required by tender age.
 What is Lord Ronald's wakeful thought,
 To chase the languor toil had brought?—
 (For deem not that he deign'd to throw
 Much care upon such coward foe,)—
 He thinks of lovely Isabel,
 When at her foeman's feet she fell,
 Nor less when, placed in princely selle,
 She glanced on him with favouring eyes,
 At Woodstocke when he won the prize.
 Nor, fair in joy, in sorrow fair,
 In pride of place as 'mid despair,
 Must she alone engross his care.

His thoughts to his betrothed bride,
 To Edith turn—O how decide,
 When here his love and heart are given,
 And there his faith stands plight to Heaven!
 No drowsy ward 'tis his to keep,
 For seldom lovers long for sleep.
 Till sung his midnight hymn the owl,
 Answer'd the dog-fox with his howl,
 Then waked the King—at his request,
 Lord Ronald stretch'd himself to rest.

XXVII.

What spell was good King Robert's, say,
 To drive the weary night away?
 His was the patriot's burning thought,
 Of Freedom's battle bravely fought,
 Of castles storm'd, of cities freed,
 Of deep design and daring deed,
 Of England's roses reft and torn,
 And Scotland's cross in triumph worn,
 Of rout and rally, war and truce,—
 As heroes think, so thought the Bruce.
 No marvel, 'mid such musings high,
 Sleep shunn'd the Monarch's thoughtful eye.
 Now over Coolin's eastern head
 The greyish light begins to spread,
 The otter to his cavern drew,
 And clamour'd shrill the wakening mew;
 Then watch'd the Page—to needful rest
 The King resign'd his anxious breast.

XXVIII.

To Allan's eyes was harder task,
 The weary watch their safeties ask.
 He trimm'd the fire, and gave to shine
 With bickering light the splinter'd pine;
 Then gazed a while, where silent laid
 Their hosts were shrouded by the plaid.
 But little fear waked in his mind,
 For he was bred of martial kind,
 And, if to manhood he arrive,
 May match the boldest knight alive.
 Then thought he of his mother's tower,
 His little sister's greenwood bower,
 How there the Easter-gambols pass,
 And of Dan Joseph's lengthen'd mass.
 But still before his weary eye
 In rays prolong'd the blazes die—
 Again he roused him—on the lake

Look'd forth, where now the twilight-flake,
 Of pale cold dawn began to wake.
 On Coolin's cliffs the mist lay furl'd.
 The morning breeze the lake had curl'd,
 The short dark waves, heaved to the land,
 With ceaseless splash kiss'd cliff or sand;—
 It was a slumbrous sound—he turn'd
 To tales at which his youth had burn'd,
 Of pilgrim's path by demon cross'd,
 Of sprightly elf or yelling ghost,
 Of the wild witch's baneful cot,
 And mermaid's alabaster grot,*
 Who bathes her limbs in sunless well
 Deep in Strathaird's enchanted cell.
 Thither in fancy rapt he flies,
 And on his sight the vaults arise;
 That hut's dark walls he sees no more,
 His foot is on the marble floor,
 And o'er his head the dazzling spars
 Gleam like a firmament of stars!
 —Hark! hears he not the sea-nymph speak
 Her anger in that thrilling shriek!
 No! all too late, with Allan's dream
 Mingled the captive's warning scream.
 As from the ground he strives to start,
 A ruffian's dagger finds his heart!
 Upwards he casts his dizzy eyes, . . .
 Murmurs his master's name, . . . and dies!

XXIX.

Not so awoke the King! his hand
 Snatch'd from the flame a knotted brand,
 The nearest weapon of his wrath;
 With this he cross'd the murderer's path,
 And venged young Allan well!
 The spatter'd brain and bubbling blood
 Hiss'd on the half-extinguish'd wood,
 The miscreant gasp'd and fell!
 Nor rose in peace the Island Lord;
 One caitiff died upon his sword,
 And one beneath his grasp lies prone,
 In mortal grapple overthrown.
 But while Lord Ronald's dagger drank
 The life-blood from his panting flank,
 The Father-ruffian of the band
 Behind him rears a coward hand!
 —O for a moment's aid,

* Note 33.

Till Bruce, who deals no double blow,
 Dash to the earth another foe,
 Above his comrade laid!—
 And it is gain'd—the captive sprung
 On the raised arm, and closely clung,
 And, ere he shook him loose,
 The master'd felon press'd the ground;
 And gasp'd beneath a mortal wound,
 While o'er him stands the Bruce.

XXX.

“Miscreant! while lasts thy flitting spark,
 Give me to know the purpose dark,
 That arm'd thy hand with murderous knife
 Against offenceless stranger's life?”—
 —“No stranger thou!” with accent fell,
 Murmur'd the wretch; “I know thee well,
 And know thee for the foeman sworn
 Of my high Chief, the mighty Lorn.”—
 “Speak yet again, and speak the truth
 For thy soul's sake!—from whence this youth?
 His country, birth, and name declare,
 And thus one evil deed repair.”—
 —“Vex me no more! . . . my blood runs cold . . .
 No more I know than I have told,
 We found him in a bark we sought
 With different purpose . . . and I thought” . . .
 Fate cut him short; in blood and broil;
 As he had lived, died Cormac Doil.

XXXI.

Then festing on his bloody blade,
 The valiant Bruce to Ronald said,—
 “Now shame upon us both!—that boy
 Lifts his mute face to heaven,
 And clasps his hands, to testify
 His gratitude to God on high,
 For strange deliverance given.
 His speechless gesture thanks hath paid,
 Which our free tongues have left unsaid!”
 He raised the youth with kindly word,
 But mark'd him shudder at the sword!
 He cleansed it from its hue of death,
 And plunged the weapon in its sheath.
 “Alas, poor child! unfitting part
 Fate doom'd, when with so soft a heart,
 And form so slight as thine;
 She made thee first a pirate's slave,
 Then, in his stead, a patron gave
 Of wayward lot like mine;

A landless prince, whose wandering life
Is but one scene of blood and strife—
Yet scant of friends the Bruce shall be,
But he'll find resting-place for thee.—
Come, noble Ronald! o'er the dead
Enough thy generous grief is paid,
And well has Allan's fate been wroke;
Come, wend we hence—the day has broke,
Seek we our bark—I trust the tale
Was false, that she had hoisted sail.”

XXXII.

Yet, ere they left that charnel-cell,
The Island Lord bade sad farewell
To Allan:—“Who shall tell this tale,”
He said, “in halls of Donagaile?
Oh, who his widow'd mother tell,
That, ere his bloom, her fairest fell!—
Rest thee, poor youth! and trust my care
For mass and knell and funeral prayer;
While o'er those caitiffs, where they lie,
The wolf shall snarl, the raven cry!”—
And now the eastern mountain's head
On the dark lake threw lustre red;
Bright gleams of gold and purple streak
Ravine and precipice and peak—
(So earthly power at distance shows;
Reveals his splendour, hides his woes.)
O'er sheets of granite, dark and broad.
Rent and unequal lay the road.
In sad discourse the warriors wind,
And the mute captive moves behind.

CANTO FOURTH.

I.

STRANGER! if e'er thine ardent step hath traced
 The northern realms of ancient Caledon,
 Where the proud Queen of Wilderness hath placed,
 By lake and cataract, her lonely throne;
 Sublime but sad delight thy soul hath known,
 Gazing on pathless glen and mountain high,
 Listing where from the cliffs the torrents thrown
 Mingle their echoes with the eagle's cry,
 And with the sounding lake, and with the moaning sky.

Yes! 'twas sublime, but sad.—The loneliness
 Loaded thy heart, the desert tired thine eye;
 And strange and awful fears began to press
 Thy bosom with a stern solemnity.
 Then hast thou wish'd some woodman's cottage nigh,
 Something that show'd of life, though low and mean;
 Glad sight, its curling wreath of smoke to spy.
 Glad sound, its cock's blithe carol would have been,
 Or children whooping wild beneath the willows green.

Such are the scenes, where savage grandeur wakes
 An awful thrill that softens into sighs;
 Such feelings rouse them by dim Rannoch's lakes,
 In dark Glencoe such gloomy raptures rise:
 Or farther, where, beneath the northern skies,
 Chides wild Loch-Eribol his caverns hoar—
 But, be the minstrel judge, they yield the prize
 Of desert dignity to that dread shore,
 That sees grim Coolin rise, and hears Coriskin roar.

II.

Through such wild scenes the champion pass'd,
 When bold halloc and bugle-blast
 Upon the breeze came loud and fast.
 "There," said the Bruce, "rung Edward's horn!
 What can have caused such brief return?
 And see, brave Ronald, see him dart
 O'er stock and stone like hunted hart,
 Precipitate, as is the use,
 In war or sport, of Edward Bruce.
 —He marks us, and his eager cry
 Will tell his news ere he be nigh."

III.

Loud Edward shouts, "What make ye here,
Warring upon the mountain-deer,
When Scotland wants her King?
A bark from Lennox cross'd our track,
With her in speed I hurried back,
These joyful news to bring—
The Stuart stirs in Teviotdale,
And Douglas wakes his native vale;
Thy storm-toss'd fleet hath won its way
With little loss to Brodick Bay,
And Lennox, with a gallant hand,
Waits but thy coming and command
To waft them o'er to Carrick strand.
There are blithe news!—but mark the close!
Edward, the deadliest of our foes,
As with his host he northward pass'd,
Hath on the borders breathed his last."

IV.

Still stood the Bruce—his steady check
Was little wont his joy to speak,
But then his colour rose:—
"Now Scotland! shortly shalt thou see,
With God's high will, thy children free,
And vengeance on thy foes!
Yet to no sense of selfish wrongs,
Bear witness with me, Heaven, belongs
My joy o'er Edward's bier;
I took my knighthood at his hand,
And lordship held of him, and land,
And well may vouch it here,
That, blot the story from his page,
Of Scotland ruin'd in his rage,
You read a monarch brave and sage,
And to his people dear."—
"Let London's burgher's mourn her Lord,
And Croydon monks his praise record,"
The eager Edward said;
"Eternal as his own, my hate
Surmounts the bounds of mortal fate,
And dies not with the dead!
Such hate was his on Solway's strand,*
When vengeance clench'd his palsied hand,
That pointed yet to Scotland's land,
As his last accents pray'd

* Note 34.

Disgrace and curse upon his heir,
 If he one Scottish head should spare,
 Till stretch'd upon the bloody lair
 Each rebel corpse was laid!
 Such hate was his, when his last breath
 Renounced the peaceful house of death,
 And bade his bones to Scotland's coast
 Be borne by his remorseless host,
 As if his dead and stony eye
 Could still enjoy her misery!
 Such hate was his—dark, deadly, long;
 Mine,—as enduring, deep, and strong!"

V.

"Let women, Edward, war with words,
 With curses monks, but men with swords:
 Nor doubt of living foes, to sate
 Deepest revenge and deadliest hate.
 Now, to the sea! Behold the beach,
 And see the galley's pendants stretch
 Their fluttering length down favouring gale
 Aboard, aboard! and hoist the sail.
 Hold we our way for Arran first,
 Where meet in arms our friends dispersed;
 Lennox the loyal, De la Haye,
 And Boyd the bold in battle fray.
 I long the hardy band to head,
 And see once more my standard spread.
 Does noble Ronald share our course,
 Or stay to raise his island force?"—
 "Come weal, come woe, by Bruce's side,"
 Replied the Chief, "will Ronald bide.
 And since two galleys yonder ride,
 Be mine, so please my liege, dismiss'd
 To wake to arms the clans of Uist,
 And all who hear the Minche's roar,
 On the Long Island's lonely shore.
 The nearer Isles, with slight delay,
 Ourselves may summon in our way;
 And soon on Arran's shore shall meet,
 With Torquil's aid, a gallant fleet,
 If aught avails their Chieftain's hest
 Among the islemen of the west."

VI.

Thus was their venturous council said.
 But, ere their sails the galleys spread,
 Coriskin dark and Coolin high
 Echoed the dirge's doleful cry.

Along that sable lake pass'd slow,—
Fit scene for such a sight of woe,—
The sorrowing islemen, as they bore
The murder'd Allan to the shore.
At every pause, with dismal shout,
Their coronach of grief ring out,
And ever, when they moved again,
The pipes resumed their clamorous strain,
And, with the pibroch's shrilling wail,
Mourning the young heir of Donagaile.
Round and around, from cliff and cave,
His answer stern old Coolin gave,
Till high upon his misty side
Languish'd the mournful notes, and died.
For never sounds, by mortal made,
Attain'd his high and haggard head,
That echoes but the tempest's moan,
Or the deep thunder's rending groan.

VII.

Merrily, merrily bounds the bark,
She bounds before the gale,
The mountain breeze from Ben-na-darch
Is joyous in her sail!
With fluttering sound like laughter hoarse,
The cords and canvass strain,
The waves, divided by her force,
In rippling eddies chased her course,
As if they laugh'd again.
Not down the breeze mōre blithely flew,
Skimming the wave, the light sea-mew,
Than the gay galley bore
Her course upon that favouring wind,
And Coolin's crest has sunk behind,
And Slapin's cavern'd shore.
'Twas then that warlike signals wake
Dunscalith's dark towers and Eisord's lake,
And soon, from Cavigarrigh's head,
Thick wreaths of eddyng smoke were spread;
A summons these of war and wrath
To the brave clans of Sleat and Strath,
And, ready at the sight,
Each warrior to his weapon sprung,
And targe upon his shoulder flung,
Impatient for the fight.
Mac-Kinon's chief, in warfare grey,
Had charge to muster their array,
And guide their barks to Brodick Bay.

VIII.

Signal of Roland's high command,
 A beacon gleam'd o'er sea and land,
 From Canna's tower, that, steep and grey,*
 Like falcon-nest o'erhangs the bay.
 Seek not the giddy crag to climb,
 To view the turret scathed by time;
 It is a task of doubt and fear
 To aught but goat or mountain-deer.
 But rest thee on the silver beach,
 And let the aged herdsman teach
 His tale of former day;
 His cur's wild clamour he shall chide,
 And for thy seat by ocean's side,
 His varied plaid display;
 Then tell, how with their Chieftain came,
 In ancient times, a foreign dame
 To yonder turret grey.
 Stern was her Lord's suspicious mind,
 Who in so rude a jail confined
 So soft and fair a thrall!
 And oft, when moon on ocean slept,
 That lovely lady sate and wept
 Upon the castle-wall,
 And turn'd her eye to southern climes,
 And thought perchance of happier times,
 And touch'd her lute by fits, and sung
 Wild ditties in her native tongue.
 And still, when on the cliff and bay
 Placid and pale the moonbeams play,
 And every breeze is mute,
 Upon the lone Hebridean's ear
 Steals a strange pleasure mix'd with fear,
 While from that cliff he seems to hear
 The murmur of a lute,
 And sounds, as of a captive lone,
 That mourns her woes in tongue unknown.—
 Strange is the tale—but all too long
 Already hath it staid the song—
 Yet who may pass them by,
 That crag and tower in ruins grey,
 Nor to the hapless tenant pay
 The tribute of a sigh!

IX.

Merrily, merrily bounds the bark
 O'er the broad ocean driven,

* Note 35.

Her path by Ronin's mountains dark
 The steerman's hand hath given.
 And Ronin's mountains dark have sent*
 Their hunters to the shore,
 And each his ashen bow unbent,
 And gave his pastime o'er,
 And at the Island Lord's command,
 For hunting spear took warrior's brand.
 On Scuir-Eigg next a warning light †
 Summon'd her warriors to the fight;
 A numerous race, ere stern MacLeod
 O'er their bleak shores in vengeance strode,
 When all in vain the ocean-cave
 Its refuge to its victims gave.
 The Chief, relentless in his wrath,
 With blazing heath blockades the path,
 In dense and stifling volumes roll'd,
 The vapour fill'd the cavern'd hold!
 The warrior-threat, the infant's plain,
 The mother's screams, were heard in vain;
 The vengeful Chief maintains his fires,
 Till in the vault a tribe expires!
 The bones which strew that cavern's gloom,
 Too well attest their dismal doom.

x.

Merrily, merrily goes the bark
 On a breeze from the northward free,
 So shoots through the morning sky the lark,
 Or the swan through the summer sea.
 The shores of Mull on the eastward lay,
 And Ulva dark, and Colonsay,
 And all the group of islets gay
 That guard famed Staffa round.‡
 Then all unknown its columns rose
 Where dark and undisturb'd repose
 The cormorant had found,
 And the shy seal had quiet home,
 And welter'd in that wondrous dome,
 Where, as to shame the temples deck'd
 By skill of earthly architect,
 Nature herself, it seem'd, would raise
 A Minster to her Maker's praise!
 Not for a meaner use ascend
 Her columns, or her arches bend;
 Nor of a theme less solemn tells
 That mighty surge that ebbs and swells,

* Note 36.

† Note 37.

‡ Note 38.

And still, between each awful pause,
 From the high vault an answer draws,
 In varied tone prolong'd and high,
 That mocks the organ's melody.
 Nor doth its entrance front in vain
 To old Iona's holy fane,
 That Nature's voice might seem to say,
 " Well hast thou done, frail Child of clay!
 Thy humble powers that stately shrine
 Task'd high and hard—but witness mine!"

XI.

Merrily, merrily goes the bark—
 Before the gale she bounds;
 So darts the dolphin from the shark,
 Or the deer before the hounds.
 They left Loch-Tua on their lee,
 And they waken'd the men of the wild Tiree,
 And the Chief of the sandy Coll;
 They paused not at Columba's isle,
 Though peal'd the bells from the holy pile,
 With long and measured toll;
 No time for matin or for mass,
 And the sounds of the holy summons pass
 Away in the billows' roll.
 Lochbuie's fierce and warlike Lord
 Their signal saw, and grasp'd his sword,
 And verdant Islay call'd her host,
 And the clans of Jura's rugged coast
 Lord Ronald's call obey,
 And Scarba's isle, whose tortured shore
 Still rings to Corrievrekan's roar,
 And lonely Colonsay;
 —Scenes sung by him who sings no more
 His bright and brief career is o'er,
 And mute his tuneful strains;
 Quench'd is his lamp of varied lore,
 That loved the light of song to pour;
 A distant and a deadly shore
 Has LEYDEN's cold remains!

XII.

Ever the breeze blows merrily,
 But the galley ploughs no more the sea.
 Lest, rounding wild Cantyre, they meet
 The southern foeman's watchful fleet,
 They held unwonted way;

Up Tarbat's western lake they bore,
 Then dragg'd their bark the isthmus o'er,*
 As far as Kilmacconnel's shore,
 Upon the eastern bay.
 It was a wondrous sight to see
 Topmast and pennon glitter free,
 High raised above the greenwood tree,
 As on dry land the galley moves,
 By cliff and copse and alder groves.
 Deep import from that selcouth sign,
 Did many a mountain Seer divine,
 For ancient legends told the Gael,
 That when a royal bark should sail
 O'er Kilmacconnel moss,
 Old Albyn should in fight prevail,
 And every foe should faint and quail
 Before her silver Cross.

XIII.

Now launch'd once more, the inland sea
 They furrow with fair augury,
 And steer for Arran's isle;
 The sun, ere yet he sunk behind
 Ben-Ghoil, "the Mountain of the Wind,"
 Gave his grim peaks a greeting kind,
 And bade Loch Ranza smile.
 Thither their destined course they drew;
 It seem'd the isle her monarch knew,
 So brilliant was the landward view,
 The ocean so serene;
 Each puny wave in diamonds roll'd
 O'er the calm deep, where hues of gold
 With azure strove and green.
 The hill, the vale, the tree, the tower,
 Glow'd with the tints of evening's hour,
 The beech was silver sheen,
 The wind breathed soft as lover's sigh,
 And, oft renew'd, seem'd oft to die,
 With breathless pause between.
 O who, with speech of war and woes,
 Would wish to break the soft repose
 Of such enchanting scene!

XIV.

Is it of war Lord Ronald speaks?
 The blush that dyes his manly cheeks,
 The timid look, and downcast eye,
 And faltering voice the theme deny.

* Note 39.

And good King Robert's brow express'd,
 He ponder'd o'er some high request,
 As doubtful to approve;
 Yet in his eye and lip the while,
 Dwelt the half-pitying glance and smile,
 Which manhood's graver mood beguile,
 When lovers talk of love.
 Anxious his suit Lord Ronald pled;
 —“ And for my bride betrothed,” he said,
 “ My Liege has heard the rumour spread
 Of Edith from Artornish fled.
 Too hard her fate—I claim no right
 To blame her for her hasty flight;
 Be joy and happiness her lot!—
 But she hath fled the bridal-knot
 And Lorn recall'd his promised plight,
 In the assembled chieftains' sight.—
 When, to fulfil our fathers' band,
 I proffer'd all I could—my hand—
 I was repulsed with scorn;
 Mine honour I should ill assert,
 And worse the feelings of my heart,
 If I should play a suitor's part
 Again to pleasure Lorn.”—

XV.

“ Young Lord,” the Royal Bruce replied,
 “ That question must the Church decide;
 Yet seems it hard, since rumours state
 Edith takes Clifford for her mate,
 The very tie, which she hath broke,
 To thee should still be binding yoke.
 But, for my sister Isabel—
 The mood of woman who can tell?
 I guess the Champion of the Rock,
 Victorious in the tourney shock,
 That knight unknown, to whom the prize
 She dealt,—had favour in her eyes;
 But since our brother Nigel's fate,
 Our ruin'd house and hapless state,
 From worldly joy and hope estranged,
 Much is the hapless mourner changed.
 Perchance,” here smiled the noble King,
 “ This tale may other musings bring.
 Soon shall we know—yon mountains hide
 The little convent of Saint Bride;
 There, sent by Edward, she must stay,
 Till fate shall give more prosperous day;
 And thither will I bear thy suit,
 Nor will thine advocate be mute.”

XVI.

As thus they talk'd in earnest mood,
That speechless boy beside them stood.
He stoop'd his head against the mast,
And bitter sobs came thick and fast,
A grief that would not be repress'd,
But seem'd to burst his youthful breast.
His hands, against his forehead held,
As if by force his tears repell'd,
But through his fingers, long and slight,
Fast trill'd the drops of crystal bright.
Edward, who walk'd the deck apart,
First spied this conflict of the heart.
Thoughtless as brave, with bluntness kind
He sought to cheer the sorrows' mind;
By force the slender hand he drew
From those poor eyes that stream'd with dew.
As in his hold the stripling strove,—
('Twas a rough grasp, though meant in love,)—
Away his tears the warrior swept,
And bade shame on him that he wept.
“I would to heaven, thy helpless tongue
Could tell me who hath wrought thee wrong!
For, were he of our crew the best,
The insult went not unredress'd.
Come, cheer thee; thou art now of age
To be a warrior's gallant page;
Thou shalt be mine!—a palfrey fair
O'er hill and holt my boy shall bear
To hold my bow in hunting grove,
Or speed on errand to my love;
For well I wot thou wilt not tell
The temple where my wishes dwell.”

XVII.

Bruce interposed—“ Gay Edward, no,
This is no youth to hold thy bow,
To fill thy goblet, or to bear
Thy message light to lighter fair.
Thou art a patron all too wild
And thoughtless, for this orphan child.
See'st thou not how apart he steals,
Keeps lonely couch, and lonely meals?
Fitter by far in yon calm cell
To tend our sister Isabel;
With father Augustine to share
The peaceful change of convent prayer,
Than wander wild adventures through,
With such a reckless guide as you.”—

"Thanks, brother!" Edward answer'd gay,
 "For the high land thy words convey!
 But we may learn some future day,
 If thou or I can this poor boy
 Protect the best, or best employ.
 Meanwhile, our vessel nears the strand;
 Launch we the boat, and seek the land."

XVIII.

To land King Robert lightly sprung,
 And thrice aloud his bugle rung
 With note prolong'd and varied strain,
 Till bold Ben-Ghoil replied again.
 Good Douglas, then, and De la Haye,
 Had in a glen a hart at bay,
 And Lennox cheer'd the laggard hounds,
 When waked that horn the greenwood bounds.
 "It is the foe!" cried Boyd, who came
 In breathless haste with eye of flame,—
 "It is the foe!—Each valiant lord
 Fling by his bow, and grasp his sword!"—
 "Not so," replied the good Lord James,
 "That blast no English bugle claims.
 Oft have I heard it fire the fight,
 Cheer the pursuit, or stop the flight.
 Dead were my heart, and deaf mine ear,
 If Bruce should call, nor Douglas hear!
 Each to Loch Ranza's margin spring;
 That blast was winded by the King!" *

XIX.

Fast to their mates the tidings spread
 And fast to shore the warriors sped.
 Bursting from glen and greenwood tree,
 High waked their loyal jubilee!
 Around the royal Bruce they crowd,
 And clasp'd his hands, and wept aloud.
 Veterans of early fields were there,
 Whose helmets press'd their hoary hair,
 Whose swords and axes bore a stain
 From life-blood of the red-hair'd Dane;
 And boys, whose hands scarce brook'd to wield
 The heavy sword or bossy shield.
 Men too were there, that bore the scars
 Impress'd in Albyn's woeful wars,
 At Falkirk's fierce and fatal fight,
 Tyndrum's dread rout, and Methven's flight;

* Note 40.

The might of Douglas there was seen,
 There Lennox with his graceful mien;
 Kirkpatrick, Closeburn's dreaded Knight;
 The Lindsay, fiery, fierce, and light;
 The Heir of murder'd De la Haye,
 And Boyd the grave, and Seton gay.
 Around their King regain'd they press'd,
 Wept, shout'd, clasp'd him to their breast,
 And young and old, and serf and lord,
 And he who ne'er unsheath'd a sword,
 And he in many a peril tried,
 Alike resolved the brunt to bide,
 And live or die by Bruce's side!

XX.

Oh, war! thou hast thy fierce delight,
 Thy gleams of joy, intensely bright!
 Such gleams, as from thy polish'd shield
 Fly dazzling o'er the battle-field!
 Such transports wake, severe and high,
 Amid the pealing conquest cry;
 Scarce less, when, after battle lost,
 Muster the remnants of a host,
 And as each comrade's name they tell,
 Who in the well-fought conflict fell,
 Knitting stern brow o'er flashing eye,
 Vow to avenge them or to die!—
 Warriors!—and where are warriors found,
 If not on martial Britain's ground?
 And who, when waked with note of fire,
 Love more than they the British lyre?—
 Know ye not,—hearts to honour dear!
 That joy, deep-thrilling, stern, severe,
 At which the heart-strings vibrate high,
 And wake the fountains of the eye?
 And blame ye, then, the Bruce, if trace
 Of tear is on his manly face,
 When, scanty relics of the train
 That hail'd at Scone his early reign,
 This patriot band around him hung,
 And to his knees and bosom clung?—
 Blame ye the Bruce?—His brother blamed,
 But shared the weakness, while ashamed,
 With haughty laugh his head he turn'd,
 And dash'd away the tear he scorn'd.

XXI.

'Tis morning, and the Couvent bell
 Long time had ceased its matin knell,
 Within thy walls, Saint Bride!

An aged Sister sought the cell
 Assign'd to Lady Isabel,
 And hurriedly she cried,
 "Haste, gentle Lady, haste!—there waits
 A noble stranger at the gates;
 Saint Bride's poor vot'ress ne'er has seen
 A Knight of such a princely mien;
 His errand, as he bade me tell,
 Is with the Lady Isabel."
 The princess rose,—for on her knee
 Low bent she told her rosary,—
 "Let him by thee his purpose teach;
 I may not give a stranger speech."—
 "Saint Bride forfend, thou royal Maid!"
 The portress cross'd herself, and said;—
 "Not to be Prioress might I
 Debate his will, his suit deny."
 "Has earthly show, then, simple fool,
 Power o'er a sister of thy rule?
 And art thou, like the worldly train,
 Subdued by splendours light and vain?"

XXIL

"No, Lady! in old eyes like mine,
 Gauds have no glitter, gems no shine;
 Nor grace his rank attendants vain,
 One youthful page is all his train.
 It is the form, the eye, the word,
 The bearing of that stranger Lord;
 His stature, manly, bold, and tall,
 Built like a castle's battled wall,
 Yet moulded in such just degrees,
 His giant-strength seems lightsome ease.
 Close as the tendrils of the vine
 His locks upon his forehead twine,
 Jet-black, save where some touch of grey
 Has ta'en the youthful hue away.
 Weather and war their rougher trace
 Have left on that majestic face;—
 But 'tis his dignity of eye!
 There, if a suppliant, would I fly,
 Secure, 'mid danger, wrongs, and grief,
 Of sympathy, redress, relief—
 That glance, if guilty, would I dread
 More than the doom that spoke me dead!"
 "Enough, enough," the Princess cried,
 "'Tis Scotland's hope, her joy, her pride!
 To meaner front was ne'er assign'd
 Such mastery o'er the common mind.—

Bestow'd thy high designs to aid,
How long, O Heaven! how long delay'd!—
Haste, Mona, haste, to introduce
My darling brother, royal Bruce!"

XXIII.

They met like friends who part in pain,
And meet in double hope again.
But when subdued that fitful swell,
The Bruce survey'd the humble cell;—
“ And this is thine, poor Isabel!—
That pallet-couch, and naked wall,
For room of state, and bed of pall;
For costly robes and jewels rare,
A string of beads and zone of hair;
And for the trumpet's sprightly call
To sport or banquet, grove or hall
The bell's grim voice divides thy care,
‘Twixt hours of penitence and prayer!—
O ill for thee, my royal claim
From the first David's sainted name!
O woe for thee, that while he sought
His right, thy brother feebly fought!”—

XXIV.

“ Now lay these vain regrets aside,
And be the unshaken Bruce!” she cried.
“ For more I glory to have shared
The woes thy venturous spirit dared,
When raising first thy valiant band
In rescue of thy native land,
Than had fair Fortune set me down
The partner of an empire's crown.
And grieve not that on Pleasure's stream
No more I drive in giddy dream,
For Heaven the erring pilot knew,
And from the gulf the vessel drew,
Tried me with judgments stern and great,
My house's ruin, thy defeat,
Poor Nigel's death, till, tamed, I own,
My hopes are fix'd on Heaven alone;
Nor e'er shall earthly prospects win
My heart to this vain world of sin.”

XXV.

“ Nay, Isabel, for such stern choice,
First wilt thou wait thy brother's voice;
Then ponder if in convent scene
No softer thoughts might intervene—

Say they were of that unknown Knight,
 Victor in Woodstock's tourney-fight—
 Nay, if his name such blush you owe,
 Victorious o'er a fairer foe!"
 Truly his penetrating eye
 Hath caught that blush's passing dye,—
 Like the last beam of evening thrown
 On a white cloud,—just seen and gone.
 Soon with calm cheek and steady eye,
 The Princess made composed reply:—
 "I guess my brother's meaning well;
 For not so silent is the cell,
 But we have heard the islemen all
 Arm in thy cause at Ronald's call,
 And mine eye proves that Knight unknown
 And the brave Island Lord are one—
 Had then his suit been earlier made,
 In his own name, with thee to aid,
 (But that his plighted faith forbade,)
 I know not . . . But thy page so near!—
 This is no tale for menial's ear."

xxvi.

Still stood that page, as far apart
 As the small cell would space afford;
 With dizzy eye and bursting heart,
 He leant his weight on Bruce's sword,
 The monarch's mantle too he bore,
 And drew the fold his visage o'er.
 "Fear not for him—in murderous strife,"
 Said Bruce, "his warning saved my life;
 Full seldom parts he from my side,
 And in his silence I confide,
 Since he can tell no tale again.
 He is a boy of gentle strain,
 And I have purposed he shall dwell
 In Augustine the chaplain's cell,
 And wait on thee, my Isabel.—
 Mind not his tears; I've seen them flow,
 As in the thaw dissolves the snow.
 'Tis a kind youth, but fanciful,
 Unfit against the tide to pull,
 And those that with the Bruce would sail,
 Must learn to strive with stream and gale.
 But forward, gentle Isabel—
 My answer for Lord Ronald tell."—

xxvii.

"This answer be to Ronald given—
 The heart he asks is fix'd on heaven.

My love was like a summer flower,
 That wither'd in the wintry hour,
 Born but of vanity and pride,
 And with these sunny visions died,
 If further press his suit—then say,
 He should his plighted troth obey,
 Troth plighted both with ring and word,
 And sworn on cruxifix and sword.—
 Oh, shame thee, Robert! I have seen
 Thou hast a woman's guardian been!
 Even in extremity's dread hour
 When press'd on thee the Southern power,
 And safety, to all human sight,
 Was only bound in rapid flight,
 Thop heard'st a wretched female plain
 In agony of travail-pain,
 And thou didst bid thy little hand
 Upon the instant turn and stand,
 And dare the worst the foe might do
 Rather than, like a knight untrue,
 Leave to pursuers merciless
 A woman in her last distress.*
 And wilt thou now deny thine aid
 To an oppress'd and injured maid,
 Even plead for Ronald's perfidy,
 And press his fickle faith on me?—
 So witness Heaven, as true I vow,
 Had I those earthly feelings now,
 Which could my former bosom move
 Ere taught to set its hopes above,
 I'd spurn each proffer he could bring,
 Till at my feet he laid the ring,
 The ring and spousal contract both,
 And fair acquittal of his oath,
 By her who brooks his perjured scorn,
 The ill-requited Maid of Lorn!"

XXVIII.

With sudden impulse forward sprung
 The page, and on her neck he hung;
 Then, recollect'd instantly,
 His head he stoop'd, and bent his knee,
 Kiss'd twice the hand of Isabel,
 Arose, and sudden left the cell.—
 The Princess, loosen'd from his hold,
 Blush'd angry at his bearing bold;
 But good King Robert cried,

* Note 47.

"Chafe not—by signs he speaks his mind,
 He heard the plan my care design'd,
 Nor could his transports hide.—
 But, sister, now bethink thee well;
 No easy choice the convent cell;
 Trust, I shall play no tyrant part,
 Either to force thy hand or heart,
 Or suffer that Lord Ronald scorn,
 Or wrong for thee, the Maid of Lorn.
 But think,—not long the time has been,
 That thou wert wont to sigh unseen,
 And would'st the ditties best approve,
 That told some lay of hapless love.
 Now are thy wishes in thy power,
 And thou art bent on cloister bower!
 O! if our Edward knew the change,
 How would his busy satire range,
 With many a sarcasm varied still
 On woman's wish, and woman's will!"—

XXIX.

"Brother, I well believe," she said,
 "Even so would Edward's part be play'd.
 Kindly in heart, in word severe,
 A foe to thought, and grief, and fear,
 He holds his humour uncontroll'd;
 But thou art of another mould.
 Say then to Ronald, as I say,
 Unless before my feet he lay
 The ring which bound the faith he swore,
 By Edith freely yielded o'er,
 He moves his suit to me no more.
 Nor do I promise, even if now
 He stood absolved of spousal vow,
 That I would change my purpose made,
 To shelter me in holy shade.—
 Brother, for little space, farewell!
 To other duties warns the bell."—

XXX.

"Lost to the world," King Robert said,
 When he had left the royal maid,
 "Lost to the world by lot severe,
 O what a gem lies buried here,
 Nipp'd by misfortune's cruel frost,
 The buds of fair affection lost!—
 But what have I with love to do?
 Far sterner cares my lot pursue.

—Pent in this isle we may not lie,
Nor would it long our wants supply.
Right opposite, the mainland towers—
Of my own Turnberry court our powers—
—Might not my father's beadsman hoar,
Cuthbert, who dwells upon the shore,
Kindle a signal-flame, to show
The time propitious for the blow?
It shall be so—some friend shall bear
Our mandate with despatch and care;
—Edward shall find the messenger.
That fortress ours, the island fleet
May on the coast of Carrick meet.—
O Scotland! shall it e'er be mine
To wreak thy wrongs in battle-line,
To raise my victor-head and see
Thy hills, thy dales, thy people free,—
That glance of bliss is all I crave,
Betwixt my labours and my grave!"
Then down the hill he slowly went,
Oft pausing on the steep descent,
And reach'd the spot where his bold train
Held rustic camp upon the plain.

"And bade Loch Ranza smile."

NOTE.—Loch Ranza is a beautiful bay, on the Northern extremity of Arran, opening towards East Tarbat Loch (Lochfyne?). It is well described by Pennant:—"The approach is magnificent; a fine bay in front, about a mile deep, having a ruined castle near the lower end, on a low, far projecting neck of land, that forms another harbour, with a narrow passage; but within has three fathom of water, even at the lowest ebb. Beyond is a little plain watered by a stream, and inhabited by the people of a small village. The whole is environed with a theatre of mountains; and, in the background, the serrated crags of Crianan-Athol soar above."—PENNANT'S TOUR TO THE WESTERN ISLES, pp. 191-2. Ben-Ghoil, "the mountain of the winds," is generally known by its English, and less poetical, name of Goatfield (Goatfell?).

CANTO FIFTH.

I.

ON fair Loch-Ranza stream'd the early day,
Thin wreaths of cottage-smoke are upward curl'd
From the lone hamlet, which het inland bay
And circling mountains sever from the world.
And there the fisherman his sail unfurl'd,
The goat-herd drove his kids to steep Ben-Ghoil,
Before the hut the dame her spindle twirl'd,
Courting the sunbeam as she plied her toil;—
For, wake where'er he may, Man wakes to care and coil,
But other duties call'd each convent maid,
Roused by the summons of the moss-grown bell;
Sung were the matins, and the mass was said,
And every sister sought her separate cell,
Such was the rule, her rosary to tell.
And Isabel has knelt in lonely prayer;
The sunbeam, through the narrow lattice, fell
Upon the snowy neck and long dark hair,
As stoop'd her gentle head in meek devotion there.

II.

She raised her eyes, that duty done,
When glanced upon the pavement-stone,
Gemm'd and encchased, a golden ring,
Bound to a scroll with silken string,
With few brief words inscribed to tell,
"This for the Lady Isabel."
Within, the writing further bore,—
" 'Twas with this ring his plight he swore,
With this his promise I restore;
To her who can the heart command,
Well may I yield the plighted hand,
And O! for better fortune born,
Grudge not a passing sigh to mourn
Her who was Edith once of Lorn!"
One single flash of glad surprise
Just glanced from Isabel's dark eyes,
But vanish'd in the blush of shame,
That, as its penance, instant came.
" O thought unworthy of my race!
Selfish, ungenerous, mean, and base,
A moment's throb of joy to own,
That rose upon her hopes o'erthrown! —

Thou pledge of vows too well believed,
 Of man ingrate and maid deceived.
 Think not thy lustre here shall gain
 Another heart to hope in vain!
 For thou shalt rest, thou tempting gaud,
 Where worldly thoughts are overawed;
 And worldly splendours sink debased,
 Then by the cross the ring she placed.

III.

Next rose the thought,—its owner fat,
 How came it here through bolt and bar?—
 But the dim lattice is ajar.—
 She looks abroad,—the morning dew
 A light short step had brush'd anew,
 And there were footprints seen
 On the carved buttress rising still,
 Till on the mossy window-sill
 Their track effaced the green:
 The ivy twigs were torn and fray'd,
 As if some climber's steps to aid.—
 But who the hardy messenger,
 Whose venturesous path these signs infer?
 Strange doubts are mine!—Mona, draw nigh;
 —Nought 'scapes old Mona's curious eye—
 What strangers, gentle mother, say,
 Have sought these holy walls to-day?"
 "None, Lady, none of note or name;
 Only your brother's foot-page came,
 At peep of dawn—I pray'd him pass
 To chapel where they said the mass;
 But like an arrow he shot by,
 And tears seem'd bursting from his eye."

IV.

The truth at once on Isabel,
 As darted by a sunbeam fell;
 "'Tis Edith's self!—her speechless woe,
 Her form, her looks, the secret show!
 —Instant, good Mona, to the bay,
 And to my royal brother say,
 I do conjure him seek my cell;
 With that mute page he loves so well."—
 "What! know'st thou not his warlike host
 At break of day has left our coast?
 My old eyes saw them from the tower.
 At eve they couch'd in greenwood bower,
 At dawn a bugle signal made
 By their bold Lord; their ranks array'd;

Up sprang the spears through bush and tree,
 No time for benedicite!
 Like deer, that, rousing from their lair,
 Just shake the dewdrops from their hair,
 And toss their armed crests aloft,
 Such matins theirs!"—"Good mother, soft—
 Where does my brother bend his way?"—
 As I have heard, for Brodick Bay,
 Across the isle—of barks a score
 Lie there, 'tis said, to waft them o'er,
 On sudden news, to Carrick-shore."—
 "If such their purpose, deep the need,"
 Said anxious Isabel, "of speed!
 Call Father Augustine, good dame."—
 The nun obey'd, the Father came.

V.

"Kind Father, hie without delay,
 Across the hills to Brodick Bay.
 This message to the Bruce be given;
 I pray him, by his hopes of Heaven,
 That, till he speak with me, he stay!
 Or, if his haste brook no delay,
 That he deliver, on my suit,
 Into thy charge that stripling muta.
 Thus prays his sister Isabel,
 For causes more than she may tell—
 Away, good Father! and take heed,
 That life and death are on thy speed."
 His cowl the good old priest did on,
 Took his piked staff and sandall'd shoon,
 And, like a palmer bent by eld,
 O'er moss and moor his journey held.

VI.

Heavy and dull the foot of age,
 And rugged was the pilgrimage;
 But none were there beside, whose care
 Might such important message bear.
 Through birchen copse he wander'd slow,
 Stunted and sapless, thin and low;
 By many a mountain stream he pass'd,
 From the tall cliffs in tumult cast,
 Dashing to foam their waters dun,
 And sparkling in the summer sun.
 Round his grey head the wild curlew
 In many a fearless circle flew.
 O'er chasms he pass'd, where fractures wide
 Craved wary eye and ample stride;

He cross'd his brow beside the stone,
 Where Druids erst heard victims groan,
 And at the cairns upon the wild,
 O'er many a heathen hero piled,
 He breathed a timid prayer for those
 Who died ere Shiloh's sun arose.
 Beside Macfarlane's Cross he staid,
 There told his hours within the shade,
 And at the stream his thirst allay'd.
 Thence onward journeying slowly still,
 As evening closed he reach'd the hill,
 Where, rising through the woodland green,
 Old Brodick's gothic towers were seen,*
 From Hastings, late their English lord,
 Douglas had won them by the sword.
 The sun had sunk behind the isle,
 Now tinged them with a parting smile.

VII.

But though the beams of light decay,
 'Twas bustle all in Brodick Bay.
 The Bruce's followers crowd the shore,
 And boats and barges some unmoor,
 Some raise the sail, some seize the oar;
 Their eyes oft turn'd where glimmer'd far
 What might have seem'd an early star
 On heaven's blue arch, save that its light
 Was all too flickering, fierce, and bright.
 Far distant in the south, the ray
 Shone pale amid retiring day,
 But as, on Carrick shore,
 Dim seen in outline faintly blue,
 The shades of evening closer drew,
 It kindled more and more.
 The monk's slow steps now press the sands,
 And now amid a scene he stands,
 Full strange to churchman's eye;
 Warriors, who, arming for the fight,
 Rivet and clasp their harness light,
 And twinkling spears, and axes bright,
 And helmets, flashing high.
 Oft, too, with unaccustom'd ears,
 A language much unmeet he hears,†
 While, hastening all on board,
 As stormy as the swelling surge
 That mix'd its roar, the leaders urge
 Their followers to the ocean verge,
 With many a haughty word.

* Note 42.

† Note 43.

VIII

Through that wild throng the Father pass'd,
 And reach'd the Royal Bruce at last.
 He leant against a stranded boat,
 That the approaching tide must float,
 And counted every rippling wave,
 As higher yet her sides they lave,
 And oft the distant fire he eyed,
 And closer yet his hauberk tied,
 And loosen'd in his sheath his brand.
 Edward and Lennox were at hand,
 Douglas and Ronald had the care
 The soldiers to the barks to share.—
 The Monk approach'd, and homage paid;
 “And art thou come,” King Robert said,
 “So far to bless us ere we part!”—
 —“My Liege, and with a loyal heart!—
 But other charge I have to tell,”—
 And spoke the hest of Isabel.
 —“Now by Saint Giles,” the Monarch cried,
 “This moves me much!—this morning tide,
 I sent the stripling to Saint Bride,
 With my commandment there to bide.”
 —“Thither he came, the portress show'd,
 But there, my Liege, made brief abode.”—

IX.

“Twas I,” said Edward, “found employ
 Of nobler import for the boy.
 Deep pondering in my anxious mind,
 A fitting messenger to find,
 To bear thy written mandate o'er
 To Cuthbert on the Carrick shore,
 I chanced, at early dawn, to pass
 The chapel gate to snatch a mass:
 I found the stripling on a tomb
 Low-seated, weeping for the doom
 That gave his youth to convent gloom;
 I told my purpose, and his eyes
 Flash'd joyful at the glad surprise:
 He bounded to the skiff, the sail
 Was spread before a prosperous gale,
 And well my charge he hath obeyed;
 For, see! the ruddy signal made,*
 That Clifford, with his merry-men all,
 Guards carelessly our father's hall.”—

* Note 44

x.

"O wild of thought, and hard of heart!"
 Answer'd the Monarch, "on a part
 Of such deep danger to employ
 A mute, an orphan, and a boy!
 Unfit for flight, unfit for strife,
 Without a tongue to plead for life!
 Now, w提醒 my right restored by Heaven,
 Edward, my crown I would have given,
 Ere, thrust on such adventure wild,
 I perill'd thus the helpless child."—
 —Offended half, and half submiss,—
 "Brother and Liege, of blame like this,"
 Edward replied, "I little dream'd.
 A stranger messenger; I deem'd,
 Might safest seek the beadsman's cell,
 Where all thy squires are known so well.
 Noteless his presence, sharp his sense,
 His imperfection his defence.
 If seen, none can his errand guess;
 If ta'en, his words no tale express—
 Methinks, too, yonder beacon's shine
 Might expiate greater fault than mine."—
 "Rash," said King Robert, "was the deed—
 But it is done. Embark with speed!—
 Good Father, say to Isabel
 How this unhappy chance befell;
 If well we thrive on yonder shore,
 Soon shall my care her page restore.
 Our greeting to our sister bear,
 And think of us in mass and prayer."

xi.

"Aye!"—said the Priest, "while this poor hand
 Can chalice raise or cross command,
 While my old voice has accents' use,
 Can Atigustine forget the Bruce?"
 Then to his side Lord Ronald press'd,
 And whisper'd, "Bear thou this request,
 That when by Bruce's side I fight,
 For Scotland's crown and Freedom's right,
 The princess grace her knight to bear
 Some token of her favouring care;
 It shall be shown where England's best
 May shrink to see it on my crest.
 And for the boy—since weightier care
 For Royal Bruce the times prepare,
 The helpless youth is Ronald's charge,
 His couch my plaid, his fence my targe,"

He ceased; for many an eager hand
Had urged the barges from the strand.
Their number was a score and ten,
They bore thrice threescore chosen men.
With such small force did Bruce at last
The die for death or empire cast!

XII.

Now on the darkening main afloat,
Ready and mann'd, rocks every boat;
Beneath their oars the ocean's might
Was dash'd to sparks of glimmering light.
Faint and more faint, as off they bore,
Their armour glanced against the shore,
And, mingled with the dashing tide,
Their murmuring voices distant died.—
“God speed them!” said the Priest, as dark
On distant billows glides each bark;
“O Heaven! when swords for freedom shine,
And monarch's right, the cause is thine!
Edge doubly every patriot blow!
Beat down the banners of the foe!
And be it to the nations known,
That Victory is from God alone!”
As up the hill his path he drew,
He turn'd his blessings to renew,
Oft turn'd, till on the darken'd coast
All traces of their course were lost;
Then slowly bent to Brodick tower,
To shelter for the evening hour.

XIII.

In night the fairy prospects sink,
Where Cumray's isles with verdant link
Close the fair entrance of the Clyde;
The woods of Bute, no more descried,
Are gone—and on the placid sea
The rowers ply their task with glee,
While hands that knightly lances bore
Impatient aid the labouring oar.
The half-faced moon shone dim and pale,
And glanc'd against the whit'en'd sail;
But on that ruddy beacon-light
Each steersman kept the helm aright,
And oft, for such the King's command,
That all at once might reach the strand,
From boat to boat loud shout and hail
Warn'd them to crowd or slacken sail.
South and by west the armada bore,
And near at length the Carrick shore,

As less and less the distance grows,
High and more high the beacon rose;
The light that seem'd a twinkling star,
Now blazed portentous, fierce, and far.
Dark-red the heaven above it glow'd,
Dark-red the sea beneath it flow'd,
Red rose the rocks on ocean's brim,
In blood-red light her islets swim;
Wild scream the dazzled sea-fowl gave,
Dropp'd from their crags on plashing wave.
The deer to distant cover drew,
The black-cock deem'd it day, and crew.
Like some tall castle given to flame,
O'er half the land the lustre came.
"Now, good my Liege, and brother sage,
What think you of mine elfin page?"—
"Row on!" the noble King replied,
"We'll learn the truth whate'er betide;
Yet sure the beadsman and the child
Could ne'er have waked that beacon wild."

XIV.

With that the boats approach'd the land,
But Edward's grounded on the sand;
The eager Knight leap'd in the sea
Waist-deep, and first on shore was he,
Though every barge's hardy band
Contended which should gain the land,
When that strange light, which, seen afar,
Seem'd steady as the polar star,
Now, like a prophet's fiery chair,
Seem'd travelling the realms of air.
Wide o'er the sky the splendour glows,
As that portentous meteor rose;
Helm, axe, and falchion glitter'd bright,
And in the red and dusky light
His comrade's face each warrior saw,
Nor marvell'd it was pale with awe.
Then high in air the beams were lost,
And darkness sunk upon the coast.—
Ronald to Heaven a prayer address'd,
And Douglas cross'd his dauntless breast;
"Saint James protect us!" Lennox cried,
But reckless Edward spoke aside,
"Deem'st thou, Kirkpatrick, in that flame
Red Comyn's angry spirit came,
Or would thy dauntless heart endure
Once more to make assurance sure?"

"Hush!" said the Bruce; "we soon shall know,
 If this be sorcerer's empty show,
 Or stratagem of southern foe.
 The moon shines out—upon the sand
 Let every leader rank his band."

xv.

Faintly the moon's pale beams supply
 That ruddy light's unnatural dye;
 The dubious cold reflection lay
 On the wet sands and quiet bay.
 Beneath the rocks King Robert drew
 His scatter'd files to order due,
 Till shield compact and serried spear
 In the cool light shone blue and clear.
 Then down a path that sought the tide,
 That speechless page was seen to glide;
 He knelt him lowly on the sand,
 And gave a scroll to Robart's hand.
 "A torch," the Monarch cried, "What, ho!
 Now shall we Cuthbert's tidings know."
 But evil news the letters bear,
 The Clifford's force was strong and ware,
 Augmented, too, that very morn,
 By mountaineers who came with Lorn.
 Long harrow'd by oppressor's hand,
 Courage and faith had fled the land,
 And over Carrick, dark and deep,
 Had sunk dejection's iron sleep.—
 Cuthbert had seen that beacon flame,
 Unwitting from what source it came.
 Doubtful of perilous event,
 Edward's mute messenger he sent,
 If Bruce deceived should venture o'er,
 To warn him from the fatal shore.

xvi.

As round the torch the leaders crowd,
 Bruce read these chilling news aloud.
 "What council, nobles, have we now?—
 To ambush us in greenwood bough,
 And take the chance which fate may send
 To bring our enterprise to end?
 Or shall we turn us to the main
 As exiles, and embark again?"—
 Answer'd fierce Edward, "Hap what may;
 In Carrick, Carrick's Lord must stay.
 I would not minstrels told the tale,
 Wildfire or meteor made us quail."

Answer'd the Douglas—"If my Liage
 May win yon walls by storm or siege,
 Then were each brave and patriot heart
 Kindled of new for loyal part."
 Answer'd Lord Ronald—"Not for shame
 Would I that aged Torquil came,
 And found, for all our empty boast,
 Without a blow we fled the coast.
 I will not credit that this land,
 So famed for warlike heart and hand,
 The nurse of Wallace and of Bruce,
 Will long with tyrants hold a truce."
 "Prove we our fate—the brunt we'll bide!"
 So Boyd and Haye and Lennox cried;
 So said, so vow'd, the leaders all;
 So Bruce resolved: "And in my hall
 Since the Bold Southern make their home,
 The hour of payment soon shall come,
 When with a rough and rugged host
 Clifford may reckon to his cost.
 Meantime, through well-known bosk and dell,
 I'll lead where we may shelter well."

XVII.

Now ask you whence that wondrous light,
 Whose fairy glow beguil'd their sight?—
 It ne'er was known—yet grey hair'd old
 A superstitious credence held,
 That never did a mortal hand
 Wake its broad glare on Carrick strand;
 Nay, and that on the self-same night
 When Bruce cross'd o'er, still gleams the light.
 Yearly it gleams o'er mount and moor,
 And glittering wave and crimson'd shore—
 But whether beam celestial, lent
 By Heaven to aid the King's descent,
 Or fire hell-kindled from beneath,
 To lure him to defeat and death,
 Or were it but some meteor strange,
 Of such as oft through midnight range,
 Startling the traveller late and lone,
 I know not—and it ne'er was known.

XVIII.

Now up the rocky pass they drew,
 And Ronald, to his promise true,
 Still made his arm the stripling's stay,
 To aid him on the rugged way.
 "Now cheer thee, simple Amadine!
 Why throbs that silly heart of thine?"—

—That name the pirates to their slave
 (In Gaelic 'tis the Changeling) gave—
 “Dost thou not rest thee on my arm?
 Do not my plaid-folds hold thee warm?
 Hath not the wild bull's treble hide
 This targe for thee and me supplied?
 Is not Clan-Colla's sword of steel?
 And, trembler, canst thou terror feel?
 Cheer thee, and still that throbbing heart;
 From Ronald's guard thou shalt not part.”
 —O! many a shaft, at random sent,
 Finds mark the archer little meant!
 And many a word, at random spoken,
 May soothe or wound a heart that's broken!
 Half sooth'd, half grieved, half terrified,
 Close drew the page to Ronald's side;
 A wild delirious thrill of joy
 Was in that hour of agony,
 As up the steepy pass he strove,
 Fear toil, and sorrow, lost in love!

XIX.

The barrier of that iron shore,
 The rock's steep ledge, is now climb'd o'er;
 And from the castle's distant wall,
 From tower to tower the warders call:
 The sound swings over land and sea,
 And marks a watchful enemy.—
 They gain'd the Chase, a wide domain
 Left for the castle's silvan reign,
 (Seek not the scene—the axe, the plough,
 The boor's dull fence, have marr'd it now,) But then, soft swept-in velvet green
 The plain with many a glade between,
 Whose tangled alleys far invade
 The depth of the brown forest shade.
 Here the tall fern obscured the lawn,
 Fair shelter for the sportive fawn;
 There, tufted close with copsewood green,
 Was many a swelling hillock seen;
 And all around was verdure meet
 For pressure of the fairies' feet.
 The glossy holly loved the park,
 The yew-tree lent its shadow dark,
 And many an old oak, worn and bare,
 With all its shiver'd boughs, was there.
 Lovely between, the moonbeams fell
 On lawn and hillock, glade and dell.

The gallant Monarch sigh'd to see
 These glades so lov'd in childhood free,
 Bethinking that, as outlaw now,
 He ranged beneath the forest's bough.

xx.

Fast o'er the moonlight Chase they sped.
 Well knew the band that measured tread,
 When, in retreat or in advance,
 The serried warriors move at once;
 And evil were the luck, if dawn
 Descried them on the open lawn.
 Copeses they traverse, brooks they cross,
 Strain up the bank and o'er the moss.
 From the exhausted page's brow
 Cold drops of toil are streaming now;
 With effort faint and lengthen'd pause,
 His weary step the stripling draws.
 "Nay, droop not yet!" the warrior said;
 "Come, let me give thee ease and aid!
 Strong are mine arms, and little care
 A weight so slight as thine to bear.—
 What! wilt thou not?—capricious boy!—
 Then thine own limbs and strength employ.
 Pass but this night, and pass thy care,
 I'll place thee with a lady fair,
 Where thou shalt tune thy lute to tell
 How Ronald loves fair Isabel!"
 Worn out, dishearten'd, and dismay'd,
 Here Amadine let go the plaid;
 His trembling limbs their aid refuse,
 He sunk amid the midnight dews!

xxi.

What may be done?—the night is gone—
 The Bruce's band moves swiftly on—
 Eternal shame, if at the brunt
 Lord Ronald grace not battle's front!—
 "See yonder oak, within whose trunk
 Decay a darken'd cell hath sunk;
 Enter, and rest thee there a space,
 Wrap in my plaid thy limbs, thy face.
 I will not be, believe me, far;
 But must not quit the ranks of war.
 Well will I mark the bosky bourne,
 And soon, to guard thee hence, return.—
 Nay, weep not so, thou simple boy!
 But sleep in peace, and wake in joy,"

In silvan lodging close bestow'd,
He placed the page, and onward strode
With strength put forth, o'er moss and brook,
And soon the marching band e'ertook.

XXII.

Thus strangely left, long sobb'd and wept
The page, till, wearied out, he slept—
A rough voice waked his dream—"Nay, here,
Here by this thicket, pass'd the deer—
Beneath that oak old Ryne staid—
What have we here?—A Scottish plaid,
And in its folds a stripling laid?
Come forth! thy name and business tell!
What, silent?—then I guess thee well,
The spy that sought old Cuthbert's cell,
Wafted from Arran yester morn—
Come, comrades, we will straight return.
Our Lord may choose the rack should teach
To this young lurcher use of speech.
Thy bow-string, till I bind him fast."—
"Nay, but he weeps and stands aghast;
Unbound we'll lead him, fear it not;
'Tis a fair stripling, though a Scot."
The hunters to the castle sped,
And there the hapless captive led,

XXIII.

Stout Clifford in the castle-court
Prepared him for the morning sport;
And now with Lorn held deep discourse
Now gave command for hound and horse.
War-steeds and palfreys paw'd the ground,
And many a deer-dog howl'd around.
To Amadine, Lorn's well-known word
Replies to that Southern Lord,
Mix'd with this clangin' din, might seem
The phantasm of a fever'd dream,
The tone upon his ringing ears
Came like the sounds which fancy hears,
When in rude waves or roaring winds
Some words of woë the muser finds,
Until more loudly and more near,
Their speech arrests the page's ear,

XXIV.

"And was she thus," said Clifford, "lost?
The priest shall rue it to his cost!
What says the monk?"—"The holy Sire
Owns that in masquer's quaint attire,

She sought his skiff, disguised, unknown
 To all except to him alone.
 But, says the priest, a bark from Lorn
 Laid them aboard that very morn,
 And pirates seized her for their prey.
 He proffer'd ransom gold to pay,
 And they agreed—but ere told o'er,
 The winds blow loud, the billows roar;
 They sever'd, and they met no more.
 He deems—such tempests vex'd the coast—
 Ship, crew, and fugitive were lost.
 So let it be, with the disgrace
 And scandal of her lofty race!
 Thrice better she had ne'er been born,
 Than brought her infamy on Lorn!"

xxv.

Lord Clifford now the captive spied;—
 "Whom, Herbert, hast thou there?" he cried.
 "A spy we seized within the Chase,
 A hollow oak his lurking place."—
 "What tidings can the youth afford?"
 "He plays the mute."—"Then noose a cord—
 Unless brave Lorn reverse the doom
 For his plaid's sake."—"Clan-Colla's loom,"
 Said Lorn, whose careless glances trace
 Rather the vesture than the face,
 "Clan-Colla's dames such tartans twine;
 Wearer nor plaid claims care of mine.
 Give him, if my advice you crave,
 His own scath'd oak; and let him wave
 In air, unless, by terror wrung,
 A frank confession find his tongue.—
 Nor shall he die without his rite;
 —Thou, Angus Roy, attend the sight,
 And give Clan-Colla's dirge thy breath,
 As they convey him to his death."—
 "O brother! cruel to the last!"
 Through the poor captive's bosom pass'd
 The thought, but to his purpose true,
 He said not, though he sigh'd, "Adieu!"

xxvi.

And will he keep his purpose still,
 In sight of that last closing ill,
 When one poor breath, one single word,
 May freedom, safety, life, afford?
 Can he resist the instinctive call,
 For life that bids us barter all?—

Love, strong as death, his heart hath steel'd,
 His nerves hath strung—he will not yield!
 Since that poor breath, that little word,
 May yield Lord Ronald to the sword.—
 Clan-Colla's dirge is pealing wide,
 The griesly headsman's by his side;
 Along the greenwood Chase they bend,
 And now their march has ghastly end!
 That old and shatter'd oak beneath,
 They destine for the place of death.
 —What thoughts are his, while all in vain
 His eye for aid explores the plain?
 What thoughts, the while, with a dizzy ear,
 He hears the death-prayer mutter'd near?
 And must he die such death accurst,
 Or will that bosom-secret burst?
 Cold on his brow breaks terrors dew,
 His trembling lips are livid blue;
 The agony of parting life
 Has nought to match that moment's strife!

xxvii.

But other witnesses are nigh,
 Who mock at fear, and death defy!
 Soon as the dire lament was play'd,
 It waked the lurking ambuscade.
 The Island Lord look'd forth, and spied
 The cause, and loud in fury cried,—
 “By Heaven, they lead the page to die,
 And mock me in his agony!
 They shall abyte it!”—On his arm
 Bruce laid strong grasp, “They shall not harm
 A ringlet of the stripling's hair;
 But, till I give the word forbear.
 —Douglas, lead fifty of our force
 Up yonder hollow water-course,
 And couch thee midway on the wold
 Between the flyers and their hold:
 A spear above the copse display'd,
 Be signal of the ambush made.
 —Edward, with forty spearmen, straight
 Through yonder copse approach the gate,
 And, when thou hear'st the battle-din,
 Rush forward, and the passage win,
 Secure the drawbridge—storm the port,
 And man and guard the castle-court.—
 The rest move slowly forth with me,
 In shelter of the forest-tree,
 Till Douglas at his post I see.”

XXVIII.

Like war-horse eager to rush on,
 Compell'd to wait the signal blown,
 Hid, and scarce hid, by greenwood bough,
 Trembling with rage, stands Ronald now,
 And in his grasp his sword gleams blue,
 Soon to be dyed with deadlier hue.—
 Meanwhile the Bruce, with steady eye,
 Sees the dark death-train moving by,
 And heedful measures oft the space
 The Douglas and his band must trace,
 Ere they can reach their destined ground.
 Now sinks the dirge's wailing sound,
 Now cluster round the direful tree
 That slow and solemn company,
 While hymn mistuned and mutter'd prayer
 The victim for his fate prepare.”—
 What glances o'er the greenwood shade?
 The spear that marks the ambuscade!
 “Now, noble Chief! I leave thee loose;
 Upon them, Ronald!” said the Bruce.

XXIX.

“The Bruce! the Bruce!” to well-known cry
 His native rocks and woods reply.
 “The Bruce! the Bruce!” in that dread word
 The knell of hundred deaths was heard.
 The astonish'd Southern gazed at first,
 Where the wild tempest was to burst,
 That waked in that presaging name.
 Before, behind, around it came!
 Half-arm'd, surpris'd, on every side
 Hemm'd in, hew'd down, they bled and died.
 Deep in the ring the Bruce engaged,
 And fierce Clan-Colla's broadsword raged!
 Full soon the few who fought were sped,
 Nor better was their lot who fled,
 And met, 'mid terror's wild career,
 The Douglas's redoubted spear!
 Two hundred yeomen on that morn
 The castle left, and none return.

XXX.

Not on their flight press'd Ronald's brand,
 A gentler duty claim'd his hand.
 He raised the page, where on the plain
 His fear had sunk him with the slain:
 And twice, that morn, surprise well near
 Betray'd the secret kept by fear;

Once, when, with life returning, came
 To the boy's lip Lord Ronald's name,
 And hardly recollection drown'd
 The accents in a murmuring sound;
 And once, when scarce he could resist
 The Chieftain's care to lose the vest,
 Drawn tightly o'er his labouring breast.
 But then the Bruce's bugle blew,
 For martial work was yet to do.

XXXI.

A harder task fierce Edward waits
 Ere signal given, the castle gates
 His fury had assail'd;
 Such was his wonted reckless mood,
 Yet desperate valour oft made good,
 Even by its daring, venture rude,
 Where prudence might have fail'd.
 Upon the bridge his strength he threw,
 And struck the iron chain in two;
 By which its planks arose;
 The warder next his axe's edge
 Struck down upon the threshold ledge,
 Twixt door and post a ghastly wedge!
 The gate they may not close.
 Well fought the Southern in the fray,
 Clifford and Lorn fought well that day,
 But stubborn Edward forced his way
 Against a hundred foes.
 Loud came the cry, "The Bruce! the Bruce!"
 No hope or in defence or truce,—
 Fresh combatants pour in;
 Mad with success, and drunk with gore,
 They drive the struggling foe before,
 And ward on ward they win.
 Unsparing was the vengeful sword,
 And limbs were lopp'd, and life-blood pour'd,
 The cry of death and conflict roar'd,
 And fearful was the din!
 The startling horses plunged and flung,
 Clamour'd the dogs till turrets rung,
 Nor sunk the fearful cry,
 Till not a foeman was there found
 Alive, save those who on the ground
 Groan'd in their agony!

XXXII.

The valiant Clifford is no more;
 O'er Ronald's broadsword stream'd his gore

But better hap had he of Lorn,
Who, by the foeman backward borne,
Yet gain'd with slender train the port,
Where lay his bark beneath the fort,

And cut the cable loose.

Short were his shrift in that debate,
That hour of fury and of fate,

If Lorn encounter'd Bruce!

Then long and loud the victor shout
From turret and from tower rung out,

The rugged vaults replied;

And from the donjon tower on high,
The men of Carrick may descrie
Saint Andrew's cross, in blazonry
Of silver, waving wide!

XXXIII.

The Bruce hath won his father's hall!*

—“Welcome, brave friends and comrades all,

Welcome to mirth and joy!

The first, the last, is welcome here,
From lord and chieftain, prince and peer,

To this poor speechless boy.

Great God! once more my sire's abode
Is mine—behold the foot I trode

In tottering infancy!

And there the vaulted arch, whose sound

Echoed my joyous shout and bound

In boyhood, and that rung around

To youth's unthinking glee!

O first, to thee, all-gracious Heaven,

Then to my friends, my thanks be given!—

He paus'd a space, his brow he cross'd—

Then on the board his sword he toss'd,

Yet steaming hot; with Southern gore

From hilt to point 'twas crimson'd o'er.

XXXIV.

“Bring here,” he said, “the mazers four,
My noble fathers loved of yore.

Thrice let them circle round the board,

The pledge, fair Scotland's rights restor'd!

And he whose lip shall touch the wine,

Without a vow as true as mine,

To hold both lands and life at nought,

Until her freedom shall be bought,—

* Note 45.

Be brand of a disloyal Scot,
 And lasting infamy his lot!
 Sit gentle friends! our hour of glee
 Is brief, we'll spend it joyously!
 Blithest of all the sun's bright beams,
 When betwixt storm and storm he gleams,
 Well is our country's work begun,
 But more, far more, must yet be done.
 Speed messengers the country through;
 Arouse old friends, and gather new;*
 Warn Lanark's knights to gird their mail,
 Rouse the brave sons of Teviotdale,
 Let Ettrick's archers sharp their darts, †
 The fairest forms, the truest hearts!
 Call all, call all! from Reedswair-Path,
 To the Wild confines of Cape-Wrath;
 Wide let the news through Scotland ring,—
 The Northern Eagle claps his wing!"

CANTO SIXTH.

I.

O WHO, that shared them, ever shall forget
 The emotions of the spirit-rousing time,
 When breathless in the mart the couriers met,
 Early and late, at evening and at prime;
 When the loud cannon and the merry chime
 Hail'd news on news, as field on field was won,
 When Hope, long doubtful, soar'd at length sublime,
 And our glad eyes, awake as day begun,
 Watch'd Joy's broad banner rise, to meet the rising sun!

O these were hours, when thrilling joy repaid
 A long, long course of darkness, doubts, and fears!
 The heart-sick faintness of the hope delay'd,
 The waste, the woe, the bloodshed, and the tears,
 That track'd with terror twenty rolling years,
 All was forgot in that blithe jubilee!
 Her downcast eye even pale Affliction rears,
 To sigh a thankful prayer, amid the glee,
 That hail'd the Despot's fall, and peace and liberty!

* Note 46.

† Note 47.

Such news o'er Scotland's hills triumphant rode,
 When 'gainst the invaders turn'd the battle's scale,
 When Bruce's banner had victorious flow'd *
 O'er Loudoun's mountain, and in Ury's vale;
 When English blood oft deluged Douglas-dale,†
 And fiery Edward routed stout St John,‡
 When Randolph's war-cry swell'd the Southern gale,§
 And many a fortress, town, and tower, was won,
 And fame still sounded forth fresh deeds of glory done.

II.

Blithe tidings flew from baron's tower,
 To peasant's cot, to forest bower,
 And waked the solitary cell,
 Where lone Saint Bride's recluses dwell.
 Princess no more, fair Isabel,
 A vot'ress of the order now,
 Say, did the rule that bid thee wear
 Dim veil and woollen scapulaire,
 And left thy locks of dark-brown hair,
 That stern and rigid vow,
 Did it condemn the transport high,
 Which glisten'd in thy watery eye,
 When minstrel or when palmer told
 Each fresh exploit of Bruce the bold ?—
 And whose the lovely form that shares
 Thy anxious hopes, thy fears, thy prayers ?
 No sister she of convent shade;
 So say these locks in lengthen'd braid,
 So say the blushes and the sighs,
 The tremors that unbidden rise,
 When, mingled with the Bruce's fame,
 The brave Lord Ronald's praises came.

III.

Believe, his father's castle won,
 And his bold enterprise begun,
 That Bruce's earliest cares restore
 The speechless page to Arran's shore.
 Nor think that long the quaint disguise
 Conceal'd her from a sister's eyes;
 And sister-like in love they dwell
 In that lone convent's silent cell.
 There Bruce's slow assent allows
 Fair Isabel the veil and vows;
 And there, her sex's dress regain'd,
 The lovely Maid of Lorn remain'd,

* Note 48

† Note 49.

‡ Note 50.

§ Note 51.

Unnamed, unknown, while Scotland far
Resounded with the din of war;
And many a month, and many a day,
In calm seclusion wore away.

IV.

These days, these months, to years had worn,
When tidings of high weight were borne
To that lone island's shore;
Of all the Scottish conquests made
By the First Edward's ruthless blade,
His son retain'd no more,
Northward of Tweed, but Stirling's towers,*
Beleaguer'd by King Robert's powers;
And they took term of truce,
If England's King should not relieve
The siege ere John the Baptist's eve,
To yield them to the Bruce.
England was roused—oh every side
Courier and post and herald hied,
To summon prince and peer,†
At Berwick-bounds to meet their Liege,
Prepared to raise fair Stirling's siege,
With buckler, brand, and spear
The term was nigh—they muster'd fast,
By beacon and by bugle-blast
Forth marshall'd for the field;
There rode each knight of noble name,
There England's hardy archers came,
The land they trode seem'd all on flame,
With banner, blade, and shield!
And not famed England's powers alone,
Renown'd in arms, the summons own;
For Neustria's knights obey'd,
Gascogne hath lent her horsemen good,
And Cambria, but of late subdued,‡
Sent forth her mountain-magnitude,
And Connought pour'd from waste and wood,§
Her hundred tribes, whose sceptre rude
Dark Eth O'Connor sway'd.

V.

Right to devoted Caledon
The storm of war rolls slowly on,
With menace deep and dread;

* Note 52.

† Note 53.

‡ Note 54.

§ Note 55.

So the dark clouds, with gathering power,
 Suspend a while the threaten'd shower,
 Till every peak and summit lower
 Round the pale pilgrim's head.
 Not with such pilgrim's startled eye
 King Robert mark'd the tempest night
 Resolved the brunt to bide,
 His royal summons warn'd the land,
 That all who own'd their King's command
 Should instant take the spear and brand,
 To combat at his side.
 O who may tell the sons of fame,
 That at King Robert's bidding came,
 To battle for the right!
 From Cheviot to the shores of Ross,
 From Solway-Sands to Marshal's-Moss,
 All boun'd them for the fight.
 Such news the royal courier tells,
 Who came to rouse dark Arran's dells;
 But farther tidings must the ear
 Of Isabel in secret hear.
 These in her cloister walk, next morn,
 Thus shared she with the Maid of Lorn:—

VI.

“ My Edith, can I tell how dear
 Our intercourse of hearts sincere
 Hath been to Isabel?—
 Judge then the sorrow of my heart,
 When I must say the words, We part!
 The cheerless convent-cell
 Was not, sweet maiden, made for thee;
 Go thou where thy vocation free
 On happier fortunes fell.
 Nor, Edith, judge thyself betray'd,
 Though Robert knows that Lorn's high Maid
 And his poor silent page were one.
 Versed in the fickle heart of man,
 Earnest and anxious hath he look'd
 How Ronald's heart the message brook'd
 That gave him, with her last farewell,
 The charge of sister Isabel,
 To think upon thy better right,
 And keep the faith his promise plight
 Forgive him for thy sister's sake,
 At first if vain repinings wake—
 Long since that mood is gone:
 Now dwells he on thy juster claims,
 And oft his breach of faith he blames—
 Forgive him for thine own!”—

VII.

"No! never to Lord Ronald's bower
 Will I again as paramour"—
 "Nay, hush thee, too impatient maid,
 Until my final tale be said!—
 The good King Robert would engage
 Edith once more his elfin page,
 By her own heart, and her own eye,
 Her lover's penitence to try—
 Safe in his royal charge, and free,
 Should such thy final purpose be,
 Again unknown to seek the cell,
 And live and die with Isabel."
 Thus spoke the maid—King Robert's eye,
 Might have some glance of policy;
 Dunstaffnage had the Monarch ta'en,
 And Lorn had own'd King Robert's reign;
 Her brother had to England fled,
 And there in banishment was dead;
 Ample, through exile, death and flight,
 O'er tower and land was Edith's right;
 This ample right o'er tower and land
 Were safe in Ronald's faithful hand.

VIII.

Embarrass'd eye and blushing cheek,
 Pleasure and shame and fear bespeak!
 Yet much the reasoning Edith made:—
 "Her sister's faith she must upbraid,
 Who gave such secret, dark and dear,
 In council to another's ear.
 Why should she leave the peaceful cell?—
 How should she part with Isabel?—
 How wear that strange attire agen?—
 How risk herself 'mid martial men?—
 And how be guarded on the way?—
 At least she might entreat delay."
 Kind Isabel, with secret smile,
 Saw and forgave the maiden's wile,
 Reluctant to be thought to move
 At the first call of truant love.

IX.

Oh, blame her not!—when zephyrs wake,
 The aspen's trembling leaves must shake;
 When beams the sun through April's shower,
 It needs must bloom, the violet flower;
 And Love, howe'er the maiden strive,
 Must with reviving hope revive!

A thousand soft excuses came,
 To plead his cause 'gainst virgin shame.
 Pledged by their sires in earliest youth,
 He had her plighted faith and truth—
 Then, 'twas her Liege's strict command,
 And she, beneath his royal hand,
 A ward in person and in land:—
 And, last, she was resolved to stay
 Only brief space—one little day—
 Close hidden in her safe disguise
 From all, but most from Ronald's eyes—
 But once to see him more!—nor blame
 Her wish—to hear him name her name!—
 Then, to bear back to solitude
 The thought he had his falsehood rued!
 But Isabel, who long had seen
 Her pallid cheek and pensive mien,
 And well herself the cause might know,
 Though innocent, of Edith's woe,
 Joy'd, generous, that revolving time
 Gave means to expiate the crime.
 High glow'd her bosom as she said,
 "Well shall her sufferings be repaid!"
 Now came the parting hour—a band
 From Arran's mountains left the land;
 Their chief, Fitz-Louis,* had the care
 The speechless Amadine to bear
 To Bruce, with honour, as behoved
 To page the Monarch dearly loved.

x.

The King had deem'd the maiden bright
 Should reach him long before the fight,
 But storms and fate her course delay:
 It was on eve of battle-day,
 When o'er the Gillie's-hill she rode.
 The landscape like a furnace glow'd,
 And far as e'er the eye was borne,
 The lences waved like autumn-corn.
 In battles four beneath their eye,†
 The forces of King Robert lie.
 And one below the hill was laid,
 Reserved for rescue and for aid;
 And three, advanced, form'd vaward-line,
 'Twixt Bannock's brook and Ninian's shrine.
 Detached was each, yet each so nigh
 As well might mutual aid supply.

* Note 56.

† Note 57.

Beyond, the Southern host appears,*
 A boundless wilderness of spears,
 Whose verge or rear the anxious eye
 Strove far, but strove in vain to spy.
 Thick flashing in the evening beam,
 Glaives, lances, bills, and banners gleam;
 And where the heaven join'd with the hill,
 Was distant armour flashing still,
 So wide, so far, the boundless host
 Seem'd in the blue horizon lost.

XI.

Down from the hill the maiden pass'd,
 At the wild show of war aghast,
 And traversed first the rearward host,
 Reserved for aid where needed most.
 The men of Carrick and of Ayr,
 Lennox and Lanark too, were there,
 And all the western land;
 With these the valiant of the Isles †
 Beneath their Chieftains rank'd their files,
 In many a plaided band.
 There, in the centre, proudly raised,
 The Bruce's royal standard blazed,
 And there Lord Ronald's banner bore
 A galley driven by sail and oar.
 A wild, yet pleasing contrast, made
 Warriors in mail and plate array'd,
 With the plumed bonnet and the plaid
 By these Hebrideans worn;
 But O ! unseen for three long years,
 Dear was the garb of mountaineers
 To the fair Maid of Lorn !
 For one she look'd—but he was far
 Busied amid the ranks of war—
 Yet with affection's troubled eye
 She marked his banner boldly fly,
 Gave on the countless foe a glance,
 And thought on battle's desperate chance.

XII.

To centre of the yaward-line
 Fitz-Louis guided Amadine.
 Arm'd all on foot, that host appears
 A serried mass of glimmering spears
 There stood the Marchers' warlike band,
 The warriors there of Lodon's land;

* Note 58.

† Note 59.

Ettrick and Liddell bent the yew,
 A band of archers fierce, though few;
 The men of Nith and Annan's vale,
 And the bold spears of Teviotdale;—
 The dauntless Douglas these obey,
 And the young Stuart's gentle sway.
 North-eastward by Saint Ninian's shrine,
 Beneath fierce Randolph's charge, combine
 The warriors whom the hardy North
 From Tay to Sutherland sent forth.
 The rest of Scotland's war-array
 With Edward Bruce to westward lay,
 Where Bannock, with his broken bank
 And deep ravine, protects their flank.
 Behind them, screen'd by sheltering wood,
 The gallant Keith, Lord Marshal, stood:
 His men-at-arms bare mace and lance,
 And plumes that wave, and helms that glance.
 Thus fair divided by the King,
 Centre, and right, and left-ward wing,
 Composed his front; nor distant far
 Was strong reserve to aid the war.
 And 'twas to front of this array,
 Her guide and Edith made their way.

XIII.

Here must they pause; for, in advance
 As far as one might pitch a lance,
 The Monarch rode along the van,*
 The foe's approaching force to scan,
 His line to marshal, and to range,
 And ranks to square, and fronts to change.
 Alone he rode—from head to heel
 Sheathed in his ready arms of steel;
 Nor mounted yet on war-horse wight,
 But, till more near the shock of fight,
 Reining a palfrey low and light.
 A diadem of gold was set
 Above his bright steel basinet,
 And clasped within its glittering twine
 Was seen the glove of Argentine;
 Truncheon or leading staff he lacks,
 Bearing, instead, a battle-axe.
 He ranged his soldiers for the fight,
 Accoutred thus, in open sight
 Of either host.—Three bowshots far,
 Paused the deep front of England's war,

* Note 6o.

And rested on their arms awhile,
 To close and rank their warlike file,
 And hold high council, if that night
 Should view the strife, or dawning light.

xiv.

O gay, yet fearful to behold,
 Flashing with steel and rough with gold,
 And bristled o'er with bills and spears,
 With plumes and pennons waving fair,
 Was that bright battle-front! for there
 Rode England's King and Peers:
 And who, that saw that Monarch ride,
 His kingdom battled by his side,
 Could then his direful doom foretell!—
 Fair was his seat in knightly selle,
 And in his sprightly eye was set
 Some spark of the Plantagenet.
 Though light and wandering was his glance,
 It flash'd at sight of shield and lance.
 "Know'st thou," he said, "De Argentine,
 Yon knight who marshals thus their line?"—
 "The tokens on his helmet tell
 The Bruce, my Liege: I know him well."—
 "And shall the audacious traitor brave
 The presence where our banners wave?"—
 "So please my Liege," said Argentine,
 "Were he but hored on steed like mine,
 To give him fair and knightly chance,
 I would adventure forth my lance."—
 "In battle-day, the King replied,
 "Nice tourney rules are set aside.
 —Still must the rebel dare our wrath?
 Set on him—sweep him from our path!"
 And at King Edward's signal, soon
 Dash'd from the ranks Sir Henry Boune,

xv.

Of Hereford's high blood he came,
 A race renown'd for knightly fame.
 He burn'd before his Monarch's eye
 To do some deed of chivalry.
 He spurr'd his steed, he couch'd his lance,
 And darted on the Bruce at once.
 —As motionless as rocks, that bide
 The wrath of the advancing tide,
 The Bruce stood fast.—Each breast beat high,
 And dazzled was each gazing eye—

The heart had hardly time to think,
 The eyelid scarce had time to wink,
 While on the King, like flash of flame,
 Spurr'd to full speed the war-horse came!
 The partridge may the falcon mock,
 If that slight palfrey stand the shock—
 But, swerving from the Knight's career,
 Just as they met, Bruce shunn'd the spear.
 Onward the baffled warrior bore
 His course—but soon his course was o'er!—
 High in his stirrups stood the King,
 And gave his battle-axe the swing.
 Right on De Boune, the whiles he pass'd,
 Fell that stern dint—the first—the last!—
 Such strength upon the blow was put,
 The helmit crash'd like hazel-nut;
 The axe-shaft, with its brazen clasp,
 Was shiver'd to the gauntlet grasp.
 Springs from the blow the startled horse,
 Drops to the plain the lifeless corse;
 —First of that fatal field, how soon,
 How sudden, fell the fierce De Boune!

XVI.

One pitying glance the Monarch sped,
 Where on the field his foe lay dead;
 Then gently turn'd his palfrey's head,
 And, pacing back his sober way,
 Slowly he gain'd his own array.
 There round their King the leaders crowd,
 And blame his recklessness aloud,
 That risk'd 'gainst each adventurous spear
 A life so valued and so dear.
 His broken weapon's shaft survey'd
 The King, and careless answer made,—
 "My loss may pay my folly's tax;
 I've broke my trusty battle-axe."
 'Twas then Fitz-Louis, bending low,
 Did Isabel's commission show;
 Edith, disguis'd, at distance stands,
 And hides her blushes with her hands.
 The Monarch's brow has changed its hue,
 Away the gory axe he threw,
 While to the seeming page he drew,
 Clearing war's terrors from his eye.
 Her hand with gentle ease he took,
 With such a kind protecting look,
 As to a weak and timid boy
 Might speak, that elder brother's care
 And elder brother's love was there.

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GRADUATE

G. P. TAYLOR



the thinnest,
the whitest,
the most
delicate
of them
all.

XVII.

"Fear not," he said, "young Amadine!"
 Then whisper'd, "Still that name be thine.
 Fate plays her wonted fantasy,
 Kind Amadine, with thee and me,
 And sends thee here in doubtful hour.
 But soon we are beyond her power;
 For on this chosen battle-plain,
 Victor or vanquish'd, I remain.
 Do thou to yonder hill repair;
 The followers of our host are there,
 And all who may not weapons bear.—
 Fitz-Louis, have him in thy care.—
 Joyful we meet, if all go well;
 If not, in Arran's holy cell
 Thou must take part with Isabel;
 For brave Lord Ronald, too, hath sworn,
 Not to regain the Maid of Lorn,
 (The bliss on earth he covets most,)
 Would he forsake his battle-post,
 Or shun the fortune that may fall
 To Britse, to Scotland, and to all.—
 But, hark! some news these trumpets tell;
 Forgive my haste—farewell!—farewell!"
 And in a lower voice he said,
 "Be of good cheer—farewell, sweet maid!"—

XVIII.

"What train of dust, with trumpet-sound*
 And glimmering spears, is wheeling round
 Our leftward flank?"—the Monarch cried,
 To Moray's Earl who rode beside.
 "Lo! round thy station pass the foes!
 Randolph, thy wreath hath lost a rose:"
 The Earl his visor closed, and said—
 "My wreath shall bloom, or life shall fade.—
 "Follow, my household!"—And they go
 Like lightning on the advancing foe.
 "My Liege," said noble Douglas then,
 "Earl Randolph has but one to ten:
 Let me go forth his band to aid!"
 —"Stir not. The error he hath made;
 Let him amend it as he may;
 I will not weaken mine array."
 Then loudly rose the conflict-cry,
 And Douglas's brave heart swell'd high,—
 "My Liege," he said, "with patient ear
 I must not Moray's death-knell hear!"—

* Note 6i.

"Then go—but speed thee back agaîn."—
 Forth sprung the Douglas with his train:
 But, when they won a rising hill,
 He bade his followers hold them still.—
 "See, see! the routed Southern fly!
 The Earl hath won the victory.
 Lo! where yon steeds run masterless,
 His banner towers above the press.
 Rein up; our presence would impair
 The fame we come too late to share."
 Back to the host the Douglas rode,
 And soon glad tidings are abroad,
 That, Dâyncourt by stout Randolph slain,
 His followers fled with loosen'd rein.—
 That skirmish closed the busy day,
 And couch'd in battle's prompt array,
 Each army on their weapons lay.

XIX.

It was a night of lovely June,
 High rode in cloudless blue the moon;
 Deuyet smiled beneath her ray;
 Old Stirling's towers arose in light,
 And, twined in links of silver bright,
 Her winding river lay.
 Ah! gentle planet! other sight
 Shall greet thee, next returning night,
 Of broken arms and banners tore,
 And marshes dark with human gore,
 And piles of slaughter'd men and horse,
 And Forth that floats the frequent corse,
 And many a wounded wretch to plain
 Beneath thy silver light in vain!
 But now, from England's host, the cry
 Thou hear'st of wassail revelry,
 While from the Scottish legions pass
 The murmur'd ptayer, the early mass!—
 Here, numbers had presumption given;
 There, bands o'er-match'd sought aid from Heaven.

XX.

On Gillie's-hill, whose height commands
 The battle-field, fair Edith stands,
 With serf and page unfit for war,
 To eye the conflict from afar.
 O! with what doubtful agony
 She sees the drivning tint the sky!—
 Now on the Ochils gleams the sun,
 And glistens now Demyet dun;

Is it the lark that carols shrill,
 'Is it the bittern's early hum?
 No!—distant, but increasing still,
 The trumpet's sound swells up the hill,
 With the deep murmur of the drum.
 Responsive from the Scottish host,
 Pipe-clang, and bugle-sound were toss'd,*
 His breast and brow each soldier cross'd,
 And started from the ground;
 Arm'd and array'd for instant fight,
 Rose archer, spearman, squire, and knight,
 And in the pomp of battle bright
 The dread battalia frown'd.

XXI.

Now onward, and in open view,
 The countless ranks of England drew,†
 Dark rolling like the ocean-tide,
 When the rough west hath chafed his pride,
 And his deep roar sends challenge wide
 To all that bars his way!
 In front the gallant archers trod,
 The men-at-arms behind them rode,
 And midmost of the phalanx broad
 The Monarch held his sway.
 Beside him many a war-horse fumes,
 Around him waves a sea of plumes,
 Where many a knight in battle known,
 And some who spurs had first braced on,
 And deem'd that fight should see them won,
 King Edward's hests obey.
 De Argentine attends his side,
 With stout De Valence, Pembroke's pride,
 Selected champions from the train,
 To wait upon his bridle-rein.
 Upon the Scottish foe he gazed—
 —At once, before his sight amazed.
 Sunk banner, spear, and shield;
 Each weapon-point is downward sent,
 Each warrior to the ground is bent.
 “The rebels, Argentine, repent!
 For pardon they have kneel'd.”—
 “Aye!—but they bend to other powers,
 And other pardon sue than ours!
 See where you bare-foot Abbot stands,‡
 And blesses them with lifted-hands!

* Note 62.

† Note 63.

‡ Note 64.

Upon the spot where they have kneel'd,
 These men will die, or win the field."—
 —Then prove we if they die or win!
 Bid Gloster's Earl the fight begin."

XXII.

Earl Gilbert waved his truncheon high,
 Just as the Northern ranks arose,
 Signal for England's archery
 To halt and bend their bows.
 Then stepp'd each yeoman forth a pace,
 Glanced at the intervening space,
 And raised his left hand high;
 To the right ear the cords they bring—
 —At once ten thousand bow-strings ring,
 Ten thousand arrows fly!
 Nor paused on the devoted Scot
 The ceaseless fury of their shot;
 As fiercely and as fast,
 Forth whistling came the grey-goose wing
 As the wild hailstones pelt and ring
 Adown December's blast.
 Nor mountain targe of tough bull-hide,
 Nor lowland mail, that storm may bide;
 Woe, woe to Scotland's banner'd pride,
 If the fell shower may last!
 Upon the right, behind the wood,
 Each by his steed dismounted, stood
 The Scottish chivalry;
 —With foot in stirrup, hand on mane,
 Fierce Edward Bruce can scarce restrain
 His own keen heart, his eager train,
 Until the archers gain'd the plain;
 Then, "Mount, ye gallants free!"
 He cried; and, vaulting from the ground,
 His saddle every horseman found.
 On high their glittering crests they toss,
 As springs the wild-fire from the moss;
 The shield hangs down on every breast,
 Each ready lance is in the rest,
 And loud shouts Edward Bruce,—
 "Forth, Marshal! on the peasant foe!*"
 We'll tame the terrors of their bow,
 And cut the bow-string loose!"

XXIII.

Then spurs were dash'd in chargers' flanks,
 They rush'd among the archer ranks,

* Note 65.

No spears were there the shock to let,
 No stakes to turn the charge were set,
 And how shall yeomen's armour slight,
 Stand the long lance and mace of might?
 Or what may their short swords avail,
 'Gainst barbed horse and shirt of mail?
 Amid their ranks the chargers sprung,
 High o'er their heads the weapons swung,
 And shriek and groan and vengeful shout
 Give note of triumph and of rout!
 Awhile, with stubborn hardihood,
 Their English hearts the strife made good.
 Borne down at length on every side,
 Compell'd to flight they scatter wide.—
 Let stags of Sherwood leap for glee,
 And bound the deer of Dallom-Lee!
 The broken bows of Bannock's shore
 Shall in the greenwood ring no more!
 Round Wakefield's merry May-pole now,
 The maids may twine the summer bough,
 May northward look with longing glance,
 For those that wont to lead the dance,
 For the blithe archers look in vain!
 Bröken, dispersed, in flight o'erta'en,
 Pierced through, trode down, by thousands slain,
 They cumber Bannock's bloody plain.

XXXIV.

The King with scorn beheld their flight.
 "Are these," he said, "our yeomen wight?
 Each bragcart churl could boast before,
 Twelve Scottish lives his baldric bore!
 Fitter to plunder chase or park,
 Than make a manly foe their mark.—
 Forward, each gentleman and knight!
 Let gentle blood show generous might,
 And chivalry redeem the fight!
 To rightward of the wild affray,
 The field show'd fair and level way;
 But, in mid-space, the Bruce's ear,
 Had bored the ground with many a pit,
 With turf and brushwood hidden yet,
 That form'd a ghastly snare,
 Rushing, ten thousand horsemen came,
 With spears in rest, and hearts on flame,
 That panted for the shock!
 With blazing crests and banners spread,
 And trumpet-clang and clamour dread,
 The wide plain thunder'd to their tread,
 As far as Stirling rock.

Down! down! in headlong overthrow,
 Horseman and horse, the foremost go,
 Wild floundering on the field!
 The first are in destruction's gorge,
 Their followers wildly o'er them urge;—
 The knightly helm and shield,
 The mail, the acon, and the spear,
 Strong hand, high heart, are useless here!
 Loud from the mass confused the cry
 Of dying warriors swells on high;
 And steeds that shriek in agony!
 They came like mountain-torrent red,
 That thunders o'er its rocky bed,
 They broke like that same torrent's wave,
 When swallow'd by a darksome cave.
 Billows on billows burst and boil,
 Maintaining still the stern turmoil,
 And to their wild and tortured groan
 Each adds new terrors of his own!

XXV.

Too strong in courage and in might
 Was England yet, to yield the fight.
 Her noblest all are here;
 Names that to fear were never known,
 Bold Norfolk's Earl De Brotherton,
 And Oxford's famed De Vere.
 There Gloster plied the bloody sword,
 And Berkley, Grey, and Hereford,
 Bottetourt and Sanzavere,
 Ross, Montague, and Mauley came,
 And Courtenay's pride, and Percy's fame—
 Names known too well in Scotland's war,
 At Falkirk, Methven, and Dunbar,
 Blazed broader yet in after years,
 At Cressy red and fell Poitiers.
 Pembroke with these, and Argentine,
 Brought up the rearward battle-line.
 With caution o'er the ground they tread,
 Slippery with blood and piled with dead,
 Till hand to hand in battle set,
 The bills with spears and axes met,
 And, closing dark on every side,
 Raged the full contest far and wide.
 Then was the strength of Douglas tried,
 Then proved was Randolph's generous pride,
 And well did Stewart's actions grace
 The sire of Scotland's royal race!
 Firmly they kept their ground;

As firmly England onward press'd,
And down went many a noble crest,
And rent was many a valiant breast,
And Slaughter revell'd round.

XXVI.

Unflinching foot 'gainst foot was set,
Unceasing blow by blow was met;
The groans of those who fell
Were drown'd amid the shriller clang,
That from the blades and harness rang,
And in the battle-yell.
Yet fast they fell, unheard, forgot,
Both Southern fierce and hardy Scot;
And O! amid that waste of life,
What various motives fired the strife!
The aspiring Noble bled for fame,
The Patriot for his country's claim;
This Knight his youthful strength to prove,
And that to win his lady's love;
Some fought from ruffian thirst of blood,
From habit some, or hardihood.
But ruffian stern, and soldier good,
The noble and the slave,
From various cause the same wild road,
On the same bloody morning, trode,
To that dark inn, the grave!

XXVII.

The tug of strife to flag begins,
Though neither loses yet nor wins.
High rides the sun, thick rolls the dust,
And feebler speeds the blow and thrust.
Douglas leans on his war-sword now,
And Randolph wipes his bloody brow;
Nor less had toil'd each Southern knight,
From morn till mid-day in the fight.
Strong Egremont for air must gasp,
Beauchamp undoes his visor-clasp,
And Montague must quit his spear,
And sinks thy falchion, bold Le Vere!
The blows of Berkley fall less fast,
And gallant Pembroke's bugle-blast
Hath lost it's lively tone;
Sinks, Argentine, thy battle-word,
And Percy's shout was fainter heard,—
“ My merry-men, fight on!”

XXVIII.

Bruce, with the pilot's wary eye,
 The slackening of the storm could spy.
 "One effort more, and Scotland's free!
 Lord of Isles, my trust in thee *
 Is firm as Ailsa Rock;
 Rush on with Highland sword and targe,
 I, with my Carrick spearmen, charge;
 Now, forward to the shock!"
 At once the spears were forward thrown,
 Against the sun the broadswords shone;
 The pibroch lent its maddening tone,
 And loud King Robert's voice was known—
 "Carrick, press on—they fail, they fail!
 Press on, brave sons of Innisgail,
 The foe is fainting fast!
 Each strike for parent, child, and wife,
 For Scotland, liberty, and life,—
 The battle cannot last!"

XXIX.

The fresh and desperate onset bore
 The foes three furlongs back and more,
 Leaving their noblest in their gore.
 Alone, De Argentine
 Yet bears on high his red-cross shield,
 Gathers the relics of the field,
 Renews the ranks where they have reel'd,
 And still makes good the line.
 Brief strife, but fierce, his efforts raise
 A bright but momentary blaze.
 Fair Edith heard the Southern shout,
 Beheld them turning from the rout,
 Heard the wild call their trumpets sent,
 In notes 'twixt triumph and lament.
 That rallying force combined anew,
 Appear'd in her distracted view,
 To hem the Islemen round;
 "O God! the combat they renew,
 And is no rescue found!
 And ye that look thus tamely on,
 And see your native land o'erthrown,
 O! are your hearts of flesh or stone?"

XXX.

The multitude that watch'd afar,
 Rejected from the ranks of war,

* Note 66.

Had not unmoved beheld the fight,
 When strove the Bruce for Scotland's right;
 Each heart had caught the patriot spark,
 Old man and stripling, priest and clerk,
 Bondsman and serf; even female hand
 Stretch'd to the hatchet or the brand;
 But, when mute Amadine they heard
 Give to their zeal his signal-word,
 A frenzy fired the throng;—
 “Portents and miracles impeach
 Our sloth—the dumb our duties teach—
 And he that gives the mute his speech,
 Can bid the weak be strong
 To us, as to our lords, are given
 A native earth, a promised heaven;
 To us, as to our lords, belongs
 The vengeance for our nation's wrongs;
 The choice, 'twixt death or freedom, warms
 Our breasts as theirs—To arms! to arms!”
 To arms they flew,—axe, club, or spear,—
 And mimic ensigns high they rear,*
 And, like a banner'd host afar,
 Bear down on England's wearied war,

XXXI.

Already scatter'd o'er the plain,
 Reproof, command, and counsel vain,
 The rearward squadrons fled amain,
 Or made but doubtful stay;—
 But when they mark'd the seeming shew
 Of fresh and fierce and marshall'd foe,
 The boldest broke array.
 O give their hapless prince his due! †
 In vain the Royal Edward threw
 His person, 'mid the spears,
 Cried, “Fight!” to terror and despair,
 Menaced, and wept, and tore his hair,
 And cursed their caitiff fears;
 Till Pembroke turn'd his bridle rein,
 And forced him from the fatal plain.
 With them rode Argentine, until
 They gain'd the summit of the hill,
 But quitted there the train:—
 “In yonder field a gage I left,
 I must not live of fame bereft;
 I needs must turn again.”

* Note 67.

† Note 68.

Speed hence, my Liege, for on your trace
The fiery Douglas takes the chase,
I know his banner well.

God send my Sovereign joy and bliss,
And many a happier field than this!—
Once more, my Liege, farewell!"

XXXII.

Again he faced the battle-field,—
Wildly they fly, are slain, or yield.
"Now then," he said, and couch'd his spear,
"My course is run, the goal is near;
One effort more, one brave career,
Must close this race of mine."
Then in his stirrups rising high,
He shouted loud his battle-cry,
"St James for Argentine!"
And, of the bold pursuers, four
The gallant knight from saddle bore;
But not unarm'd—a lance's point
Has found his breastplate's loosen'd joint,
An axe has razed his crest;
Yet still on Colonsay's fierce lord,
Who press'd the chase with gory sword,
He rode with spear in rest,
And through his bloody tartans bored,
And through his gallant breast,
Nail'd to the earth, the mountaineer
Yet writhed him up against the spear,
And swing his broadsword round!
—Stirrup, steel-boot, and quish gave way,
Beneath that blow's tremendous sway,
The blood gush'd from the wound;
And the grim Lord of Colonsay
Hath turn'd him on the ground,
And laugh'd in death-pang that his blade
The mortal thrust so well repaid.

XXXIII.

Now toil'd the Bruce, the battle done,
To use his conquest boldly won;
And gave command for horse and spear
To press the Southern's scatter'd rear,
Nor let his broken force combine,
When the war-cry of Argentine
Fell faintly on his ear;
"Save, save his life," he cried, "O save
The kind, the noble, and the brave!"
The squadrons round free passage gave,
The wounded knight drew near;

He raised his red-cross shield no more,
Helm, cuish, and breastplate stream'd with gore,
Yet, as he saw the King advance,
He strove even then to couch his lance—

The effort was in vain!

The spur-stroke fail'd to rouse the horse;
Wounded and weary, in mid course
He stumbled on the plain.

Then foremost was the generous Bruce
To raise his head, his helm to loose;—
“Lord Earl, the day is thine!

My sovereign's charge, and adverse fate,
Have made our meeting all too late:

Yet this may Argentine,
As boon from ancient comrade, crave—
A Christian's mass, a soldier's grave.”

XXXIV.

Bruce press'd his dying hand—its grasp
Kindly replied; but, in his clasp,

It stiffen'd and grew cold—

“And, O farewell!” the victor cried,
“Of chivalry the flower and pride,

The arm in battle bold,
The courteous mien, the noble race,
The stainless faith, the manly face! —
Bid Ninian's convent light their shrine,
For late-wake of De Argentine.
O'er better knight on death-bier laid,
Torch never gleam'd nor mass was said!”

XXXV.

Nor for De Argentine alone,
Through Ninian's church these torches shone,
And rose the death-prayer's awful tone.
That yellow lustre glimmer'd pale,
On broken plate and bloodied mail,
Rent crest and shatter'd coronet,
Of Baron, Earl, and Banneret;
And the best names that England knew,
Claim'd in the death-prayer dismal due.

Yet mourn not, Land of Fame!
Though ne'er the Leopards on thy shield
Retreated from so sad a field,
Since Norman William came.
Oft may thine annals justly boast
Of battles stern by Scotland lost;
Grudge not her victory,

When for her freeborn rights she strove;
 Rights dear to all who freedom love,
 To none so dear as thee!

XXXVI.

Turn we to Bruce, whose curious ear
 Must from Fitz-Louis tidings hear;
 With him, a hundred voices tell
 Of prodigy and miracle,
 “For the mute page had spoke.”—
 “Page!” said Fitz-Louis, “rather say,
 An angel sent from realms of day,
 To burst the English yoke.
 I saw his plume and bonnet drop,
 When hurrying from the mountain top;
 A lovely brow, dark locks that wave,
 To his bright eyes new lustre gave,
 A step as light upon the green,
 As if his pinions waved unseen!”
 “Spoke he with none?”—“With none—one word
 Burst when he saw the Island Lord
 Returning from the battle-field.”—
 “What answer made the Chief?”—“He kneel’d,
 Durst not look up, but mutter’d low,
 Some mingled sounds that none might know,
 And greeted him ‘twixt joy and fear,
 As being of superior sphere.”

XXXVII.

Even upon Bannock’s bloody plain,
 Heap’d then with thousands of the slain,
 ’Mid victor monarch’s musings high,
 Mirth laugh’d in good King Robert’s eye:—
 “And bore he such angelic air,
 Such noble front, such waving hair?
 Hath Ronald kneel’d to him?” he said;
 “Then must we call the church to aid—
 Our will be to the Abbot known,
 Ere these strange news are wider blown,
 To Cambuskenneth straight ye pass,
 And deck the church for solemn mass;
 To pay for high deliverance given,
 A nation’s thanks to gracious Heaven.
 Let him array, besides, such state,
 As should on princes’ nuptials wait.
 Ourselves the cause, through fortune’s spite,
 That once broke short that spousal rite,
 Ourselves will grace, with early morn,
 The Bridal of the Maid of Lorn.

CONCLUSION.

Go forth, my Song, upon thy venturesome way;
Go boldly forth; nor yet thy master blame,
Who chose no patron for his hutabie lay,
And graced thy numbers with no friendly name,
Whose partial zeal might smooth thy path to fame.
There was—and O! how many sorrows crowd
Into these two brief words!—*there was* a claim
By generous friendship given—had fate allow'd,
It well had bid thee rank the proudest of the proud!

All angel now—yet little less than all,
While still a pilgrim in our world below!
What vails it us that patience to recall,
Which hid its own to soothe all other woes;
What vails to tell, how Virtue's purest glow
Shone yet more lovely in a form so fair:
And, least of all, what vails the world should know,
That one poor garland, twined to deck thy hair,
Is hung upon thy hearse; to droop and wither there!

NOTES.

NOTE 1, Page 6.—“*Will long pursue the minstrel’s bark.*”

The seal displays a taste for music, which could scarcely be expected from his habits and predilections. They will long follow a boat in which any musical instrument is played, and even a tune simply whistled has attractions for them. The Diem of the Isles says of Heiskar, a small uninhabited rock, about twelve miles from the Isle of Uist, that an infinite slaughter of seals takes place there.

NOTE 2, Page 9.—“*Dark Mull! thy mighty Sound.*”

The Sound of Mull, which divides that island from the continent of Scotland, is one of the most striking scenes which the Hebrides afford to the traveller (tourist?). Sailing (steaming?) from Oban to Aros, or Tobermory, through a narrow channel, yet deep enough to bear vessels of the largest burthen, he has on his left the bold and mountainous shores of Mull, on the right those of that district of Argyleshire called Morvern, successively indented by deep salt water lochs, running up many miles inland. To the south-eastward arise a prodigious range of mountains, among which Cruchan-Ben is pre-eminent. And to the north-west is the no less large and picturesque range of the Ardnamurchan hills. Many ruinous castles, situated generally upon cliffs overhanging the ocean, add interest to the scene. Those of Dunolly and Dunstaffnage are first passed, then that of Duart, formerly belonging to the chief of the warlike and powerful sept of MacLeans, and the scene of Miss Baillie’s beautiful Tragedy entitled the “Family Legend.” (*It may be added also, of Campbell’s Lyric of “Glenara, Glenara, now read me my dream!”*) Still passing on to the northward, Arturnish and Aros became visible upon the opposite shores, and lastly, Mingarry, and other ruins of less distinguished note. In fine weather, a grander and more impressive scene, both from its natural beauties, and associations with ancient history and tradition, can hardly be imagined. In unsettled weather, a stranger, if not much accustomed to the sea, may sometimes add to the other sublime sensations excited by the scene, that feeling of dignity which arises from a sense of danger.

NOTE 3, Page 9.—“*From Hirt, to the green Islay’s fertile shore.*”

The number of the western isles of Scotland exceeds two hundred, of which St Kilda is the most northerly, anciently called Hirth, or Hirt, probably from “earth,” being, in fact, the whole globe to the inhabitants. Islay is by far the most fertile of the Hebrides, and has been greatly improved. This was in ancient times the principal abode of the Lord of the Isles, being, if not the largest, the most important island of the Archipelago.

NOTE 4, Page 9.—“*Where Mingarry, sternly placed.*”

The castle of Mingarry is situated on the sea-coast of the district of Ardnamurchan. The ruins, which are tolerably entire, are surrounded by a very high wall, forming a kind of polygon, for the purpose of adapting itself to the projecting angles of a precipice overhanging the sea, on which the castle stands. It was anciently the residence of the Macleans, a clan of MacDonalds, descended from Ian, or John, a grandson of Angus Og, Lord of the Isles.

NOTE 5, Page 9.—“*The Heir of mighty Somerled.*”

Somerled was thane of Argyle and Lord of the Isles, about the middle of the twelfth century. He seems to have exercised his authority in both capacities, independent of the crown of Scotland, against which he often stood in hostility. He made various incursions upon the western Lowlands during the reign of Malcolm IV., and seems to have made peace with him upon the terms of an independent prince, about the year 1157. In 1164 he resumed the war against Malcolm, and invaded Scotland with a large, but probably a tumultuary army, collected in the isles, in the mainland of Argyleshire, and in the neighbouring provinces of Ireland. He was defeated and slain in an engagement with a very inferior force, near Renfrew. His son Gillicolane fell in the same battle. This mighty chieftain married a daughter of Olaus, King of Man. From him our

genealogists deduce two dynasties, distinguished in the stormy history of the middle ages; the Lords of the Isles descended from his elder son Ronald, and the Lords of Lorn were surnamed M'Dougal, as descended of his second son Dougal. That Somerled's territories upon the mainland, and upon the islands, should have been divided between his two sons, instead of passing to the elder, illustrates the uncertainty of descent among the great Highland families.

NOTE 6, Page 9.—“*Lord of the Isles, whose lofty name.*”

The representative of this independent principality, for such it seems to have been, though acknowledging occasionally the pre-eminence of the Scottish crown, was, at the period of the poem, Angus, called Angus Og; but the name has been, *exphonia gratia*, exchanged for that of Ronald, which frequently occurs in the genealogy. Angus was a protector of Robert Bruce, whom he received in his castle of Dunnnaverty, during the time of his greatest distress.—[Dunnnaverty, South-end, Campbellton, near to the Mull of Cantyre.]

NOTE 7, Page 11.—“*House of Lorn.*”

The house of Lorn was, like that of the Lord of the Isles, descended from a son of Somerled, slain at Renfrew, in 1164. This son obtained the succession of his mainland territories, comprehending the greater part of the three districts of Lorn, in Argyleshire, and the possessors of such extensive authority of course might rather be considered as petty princes, than feudal barons. They assumed the patronymic appellation of MacDougal, by which they are distinguished in the history of the middle ages. The Lord of Lorn, who flourished during the reign of Bruce, was Allaster of Argyle. He had married the third daughter of John, the Red Comyn, who was slain by Bruce in the Dominican church at Dumfries.

“*He that now bears shall wreak the wrong.*”

Allaster of Lorn was a mortal enemy of that prince, and more than once reduced him to great straits during the early and distressed period of his reign. Bruce, when he began to obtain an ascendancy in Scotland, took the first opportunity in his power to requite these injuries. He marched into Argyleshire to lay waste the country. John of Lorn, son of the chieftain, was posted with his followers in the formidable pass between Dalmally and Bunawe. It is a narrow path along the verge of the large and precipitous mountain called Cruchan-Ben, and guarded on the other side by a precipice overhanging Loch-Awe. The pass seems to the eye of a soldier as strong as it is wild and romantic to that of an ordinary traveller. But the skill of Bruce had anticipated this difficulty; while his main body, engaged in a skirmish with the men of Lorn, confined their attention to the front of their position, James Douglas, with Sir Alexander Fraser, Sir William Wiseman, and Sir Andrew Grey, ascended the mountain with a select body of archery, and obtained possession of the heights which commanded the pass. A volley of arrows descending from them, directly warned the Argyleshire men of their perilous position, and their resistance, which had hitherto been bold and manly, was changed into a precipitate flight. The deep and rapid river of Awe was then (we learn the fact from Buchanan, with some surprise) crossed by a bridge (*scarce credible it should have so been*). This bridge the mountaineers attempted to demolish, but Bruce's followers were too close upon their rear; they were, therefore, without refuge or defence, and were dispersed with great slaughter. After this decisive engagement, Bruce laid waste Argyleshire, and besieged Dunstaffnage Castle, on the western shore of Lorn, compelled it to surrender, and placed in that principal stronghold of the MacDouglas a garrison and governor of his own. The house of MacDougal affords a very rare, if not an unique, instance of a family of such unlimited power, and so distinguished during the middle ages, surviving the decay of their grandeur, and flourishing in a private station. The Castle of Dunolly, near Oban, with its dependencies, was the principal part of what remained to them, with their right of chieftainship over the families of their name and blood. These they contrived to enjoy until the year 1715, when the representative incurred the penalty of forfeiture, for his accession to the insurrection of that period. The estate was, however, restored about 1745, the chief of that day having remained quiet on that occasion; and thus regained his property, when many Highland chiefs lost theirs.

NOTE 8, Page 15.—“*Those lightnings of the wave.*”

The phenomenon called by sailors Sea-fire, is one of the most beautiful and interesting which is witnessed in the Hebrides: at times the ocean appears entirely illuminated around the vessel, and a long train of lambent coruscations are per-

petually bursting upon the sides of the vessel, or pursuing her wake through the darkness. These phosphoric appearances, concerning the origin of which naturalists are not agreed in opinion, seem to be called into action by the rapid motion of the ship through the water, and are probably owing to the water being saturated with fish-spawn, or other animal substances.

NOTE 9, Page 16.—“Sought the dark fortress by a stair.”

The fortress of a Hebridean chief was almost always on the sea-shore, for the facility of communication which the ocean afforded. Nothing can be more wild than the situations which they chose, and the devices by which the architects endeavoured to defend them. Narrow stairs and arched vaults were the usual mode of access, and the draw-bridge appears at Dunstaffnage, and elsewhere, to have fallen from the gate of the building to the top of such a staircase; so that any one advancing with hostile purpose, found himself in a state of exposed and precarious elevation, with a gulph between him and the object of his attack. These fortresses were guarded with equal care. The duty of the watch devolved chiefly upon an officer called the Cockman, who had the charge of challenging all who approached the castle.

NOTE 10, Page 20.—“That keen knight, De Argentine.”

Sir Egidias, or Giles De Argentine, was one of the most accomplished knights of the period. He had served in the wars of Henry of Luxembourg with such high reputation that he was, in popular estimation, the third worthy of the age. Those to whom fame assigned precedence over him were Henry of Luxembourg himself, and Robert Bruce. Argentine had warred in Palestine, encountered thrice with the Saracens, and had slain two antagonists in each engagement—an easy matter, he said, for one Christian knight to slay two Pagan dogs. His death corresponded with his high character. With Aymer de Valance, Earl of Pembroke, he was appointed to attend immediately upon the person of Edward II. When the day was utterly lost, they forced the King from the field. De Argentine saw the King safe from immediate danger, and then took his leave of him. “God be with you, Sir,” he said; “tis not my wont to fly.” So, raising his battle cry, he threw himself into the melee, and fell there.

NOTE 11, Page 21.—“‘Fill me the mighty cup,’ he said.”

A Hebridean drinking cup, of the most ancient and curious workmanship, has been long preserved in the castle of Dunvegan, the romantic seat of MacLeod, the chief of that ancient and powerful clan. The horn of Rorie More, preserved in the same family, and recorded by Dr Johnson, is not to be compared with this piece of antiquity, which is one of the greatest curiosities in Scotland. It is nine inches and three-quarters in inside depth, and ten and a half in height on the outside, the extreme measure over the lips being four inches and a half. The cup is divided into two parts by a wrought ledge, beautifully ornamented, about three-fourths of an inch in breadth. Beneath this ledge the shape of the cup is rounded off, and terminates in a flat circle, like that of a teacup: four short feet support the whole. Above the projecting ledge the shape of the cup is nearly square, projecting outward at the brim. The cup is made of wood (oak to all appearance), but most curiously wrought and embossed with silver-work, which projects from the vessel. There are a number of regular projecting sockets, which appear to have been set with stones; two or three of them still hold pieces of coral, the rest are empty. At the four corners of the projecting ledge, or cornice, are four sockets, much larger, probably for pebbles or precious stones. The workmanship of the silver is extremely elegant, and appears to have been highly gilded. The ledge, brim, and legs of the cup, are of silver. The family tradition bears that it was the property of Neil Ghlune-dhu, or Black-knee.

NOTE 12, Page 22.—“The Seneschal the presence scann'd.”

The Server, to whom, rather than the Seneschal, the office of arranging the guests of an island chief appertained, was an office of importance in the family of an Hebridean chief. “Every family had commonly two stewards—the first served always at home, and was obliged to be versed in the pedigree of all the tribes in the Isles, and in the Highlands of Scotland; for it was his province to assign every man at table his seat, according to his quality; and this was done without one word speaking, only by drawing a score with a white rod, which this marischal held in his hand, before the person who was bid by him to sit down.”—MARTIN'S WESTERN ISLES.

NOTE 13, Page 23.—“With Carrick’s outlawed Chief.”

It must be remembered by all who have read the Scottish history, that after he had slain Comyn at Dumfries, and asserted his right to the Scottish crown, Robert Bruce was reduced to the greatest extremity by the English and their adherents. He was crowned at Scone by the general consent of the Scottish barons, but his authority endured but a short time. According to the phrase said to have been used by his wife, he was for that year “a summer king, but not a winter one.” On the 29th March, 1306, he was crowned king at Scone. Upon the 19th June in the same year, he was totally defeated at Methven, near Perth; and has most important adherents, with few exceptions, either executed, or compelled to embrace the English interest, for safety of their lives and fortunes. After this disaster, his life was that of an outlaw, rather than that of a candidate for monarchy. After many perilous adventures, and being driven to extremes, he separated himself from the females of his retinue, whom he sent for safety to the castle of Kildrummy, in Aberdeenshire, where they afterwards became captives to England. From Aberdeenshire Bruce retreated to the mountainous parts of Breadalbane, and approached the borders of Argyleshire. There he was defeated by the Lord of Lorn, who had assumed arms against him in revenge of the death of his relative, John the Red Comyn. Escaped from this peril, Bruce, with his few attendants, subsisted by hunting and fishing, until the weather compelled them to seek better sustenance and shelter than the Highland mountains afforded. With great difficulty they crossed, from Rowardennan probably, to the western banks of Loch-Lomond, partly in a miserable boat and partly by swimming. The valiant and loyal Earl of Lennox, to whose territories they had now found their way, welcomed them with tears, but was unable to assist them to make an effectual band. The Lord of the Isles, then in possession of great part of Cantyre, received the fugitive monarch and future restorer of his country’s independence, in his castle of Dumaverty, in that district (extreme south). But treason, says Barbour, was so general, that the King durst not abide there. With the remnant of his followers, Bruce embarked for Rath-Erin, or Rachrine (Rathlin), the Recina of Ptolemy, a small island lying almost opposite to the shores of Ballycastle, on the coast of Ireland. The islanders at first fled from their new and armed guests, but upon some explanation submitted themselves to Bruce’s sovereignty. He resided among them until the approach of spring (1307), when he again returned to Scotland, with the desperate resolution to re-conquer his kingdom or perish in the attempt. The progress of his success forms the brightest period in Scottish history.

NOTE 14.—“DUNOLLY.”

Nothing can be more wildly beautiful than the situation of Dunolly. The ruins are situated upon a bold and precipitous promontory, overhanging Loch-Etive (the bay of Oban), and distant about a mile from the village and port of Oban. The principal part which remains is the donjon or keep; lids fragments of other buildings, overgrown with ivy, attest that it had been once a place of importance, as large, apparently, as Ardtornish or Dunstaffnage. These fragments include a court-yard, of which the keep probably formed one side,—the entrance being by a steep ascent from the neck of the isthmus, formerly cut across by a moat, and defended, doubtless, by outworks and a draw-bridge. Beneath the castle stands the present mansion of the family, having on the one hand Loch-Etive (*the Linne-Loch*), with its islands and mountains, on the other, two romantic eminences, tufted with copsewood. There are other accompaniments suited to the scene,—in particular, a huge upright pillar, or detached fragment of that sort of rock called plum-pudding stone, upon the shore, about a quarter of a mile from the castle. It is called *clack-na-cra*, or the dog’s pillar, because Fingal is said to have used it as a stake to which he bound his celebrated dog Bran. Others say, that when the Lord of the Isles came upon a visit to the Lord of Lorn, the dogs brought for his sport were kept beside this pillar. Upon the whole, a more romantic spot can scarce be conceived; and it receives a moral interest from the consideration attached to the residence of a family once powerful enough to confront and defeat Robert Bruce, and now sunk into the shade of private life.

NOTE 15, Page 24.—“The Brooch of Lorn.”

According to Barbour, the king, with about three hundred men, encountered Lorn with about a thousand Argyleshire men in Glen-Dochart, at the head of Breadalbane, near Tyndrum. The field of action is still called Dalry, or the King’s field. The field of battle was unfavourable to Bruce’s adherents, who were chiefly men at arms. Many of the horses were slain by the pole-axes, of which the Argyleshire Scottish had learned the use from the Norwegians.

length Bruce commanded a retreat up a narrow and difficult pass, he himself bringing up the rear, and repeatedly turning and driving back the more venturesome assailants. Two brothers, the strongest among Lorn's followers, resolved to rid their chief of this formidable foe. A third person, the MacKeech of the family tradition, associated himself with them for this purpose. They waited their opportunity, until Bruce's party had entered a pass between the loch and a precipice, where the king, who was the last of the party, had scarce room to manage his steed. Here the three foes sprang upon him at once. One seized his bridle, but received a wound which pared off his arm; a second grasped Bruce by the stirrup and leg, and endeavoured to dismount him, but the king, putting spurs to his horse, threw him down, still holding by the stirrup; the third, taking advantage of an acclivity, sprang up behind him upon his horse. Bruce, however, whose personal strength is uniformly mentioned as exceeding that of most men, extricated himself from his grasp, threw him to the ground, and cleft his skull with his sword. By similar exertion he drew his stirrup from his grasp whom he had overthrown, and killed him also with his sword as he lay among his horse's feet. MacNaughton, a baron of Cowal, pointed out to the Lord of Lorn the deeds of valour which Bruce performed in this memorable retreat, with the highest expressions of admiration. "It seems to give thee pleasure," said Lorn, "that he makes such havoc among our friends."—"Not so, by my faith," replied MacNaughton; "but be he friend or foe who achieves high deeds of chivalry, man should bear faithful witness to his valour; and never have I heard of one, who, by his knightly feats, has extricated himself from such danger as have this day surrounded Bruce." "*Studded fair with gems of price.*" Great value was bestowed upon the *fibula*, or brooch, which secured the plaid, when the wearer was a person of importance.

NOTE 16, Page 25.—"Vain Kirkpatrick's bloody dirk."

Every reader must recollect that the proximate cause of Bruce's asserting his right to the crown of Scotland, was the death of John, called the Red Comyn. The causes of this act of violence, equally extraordinary from the high rank both of the perpetrator and sufferer, and from the place where the slaughter was committed, are variously related by the Scottish and English historians, and cannot now be ascertained. The fact that they met at the high altar of the Minorites, or Greyfriars' Church in Dumfries, that their difference broke out into high and insulting language, and that Bruce drew his dagger and stabbed Comyn, is certain. Rushing to the door of the church, Bruce met two powerful barons, Kirkpatrick of Closeburn and James de Lindsay, who eagerly asked him, what tidings? "Bad tidings," answered Bruce; "I doubt I have slain Comyn."—"Doubtest thou?" said Kirkpatrick; "I make sicker," (*i.e.*, sure.) With these words, he and Lindsay rushed into the church, and despatched the wounded Comyn. The Kirkpatricks of Closeburn assumed, in memory of this deed, a hand holding a dagger, with the memorable words, "I make sicker."

NOTE 17, Page 25.—"Fled the fiery De la Haye."

These knights are enumerated by Barbour, among the small number of Bruce's adherents, who remained in arms with him after the battle of Methven. There were more than one of the noble family of Hay engaged in Bruce's cause. But the principal was Gilbert De la Haye, Earl of Errrol, a stanch adherent of King Robert's interest, whom he rewarded by creating him hereditary Lord High Constable of Scotland, a title which he used 15th March, 1308, where, in a letter from the peers of Scotland to Philip the Fair of France, he is designated *Gilbertus de Hay Constabularius Scotiae*. He was slain at the battle of Halidoun-hill. Hugh De la Haye, his brother, was made prisoner at the battle of Methven.

NOTE 18, Page 25.—"Well hast thou framed, Old Man, thy strains."

The character of the Highland bards, however high in our earlier periods of society, seems soon to have degenerated. The Irish affirm, that in their kindred tribes severe laws became necessary to restrain their avarice. In the Highlands they seem gradually to have sunk into contempt, as well as the orators, or men of speech, with whose office that of family poet was often united.

NOTE 19, Page 30.—"Was't not enough, to Ronald's bower."

It was anciently customary in the Highlands to bring the bride to the house of the husband. Nay, in some cases the complaisance was stretched so far, that she remained there upon trial for a twelvemonth; and the bridegroom, even after this period of cohabitation, retained an option of refusing to fulfil his engagement. It

is said that a desperare feud ensued between the clans of MacDonald of Sleat and MacLeod, owing to the former chief having availed himself of this licence to send back to Dunvegan a sister, or daughter of the latter. MacLeod, resenting the indignity, observed, that since there was no wedding bonfire, there should be one to solemnize the divorce. Accordingly, he burned and laid waste the territories of MacDonald, who retaliated, and a deadly feud, with all its accompaniments, took place in form.

NOTE 20, Page 31.—“Since Matchless Wallace first had been.”

There is something singularly doubtful about the mode in which Wallace was taken. That he was betrayed to the English is indubitable; and popular fame charges Sir John Menteith with the indelible infamy. “Accursed,” says Arnold Blair, “be the day of nativity of John de Menteith, and may his name be struck out of the book of life.” But John de Menteith was all along a zealous favourer of the English interest, and was governor of Dumbarton Castle by commission from Edward the First; and therefore, as the accurate Lord Hailes has observed, could not be the friend and confidant of Wallace, as tradition states him to be. The truth seems to be, that Menteith, thoroughly engaged in the English interest, pursued Wallace closely, and made him prisoner through the treachery of an attendant, whom Peter Langtoft calls Jack Short.

The infamy of seizing Wallace must, therefore, rest between a degenerate Scottish nobleman, the vassal of England, and a domestic, the obscure agent of his treachery; between Sir John Monteith, son of Walter, Earl of Monteith, and the traitor Jack Short.

Stowe gives the following curious account of the trial and execution of this celebrated patriot:—“William Wallace, who had oft-times set Scotland in great trouble, was taken and brought to London, with great numbers of men and women wondering upon him. He was lodged in the house of William Delect, a citizen of London, in Fenchurch Street. On the morrow, being the eve of St Bartholemew, he was brought on horseback to Westminster, John Legrave and Geoffrey, knights, the mayor, sheriffs, and aldermen of London, and many others, both on horseback and on foot, accompanying him; and in the great hall of Westminster, he being placed on the south bench, crowned with laurel, for that he had said in times past, that he ought to wear a crown in that hall, and being apprehended for a traitor by Sir Peter Malorie, the king’s justice, he answered—‘That he was never traitor to the King of England;’ but for other things whereof he was accused, he confessed them; and was after headed and quartered.”

NOTE 21, Page 31.—“Where’s Nigel Bruce?”

Sir Nigel Bruce was the younger brother of Robert, to whom he committed the charge of his wife and daughter, Marjorie, and the defence of his strong castle of Kildrummy, near the head of the Don, in Aberdeenshire. Kildrummy long resisted the arms of the Earls of Lancaster and Hereford, until the magazine was treacherously burnt. The garrison was then compelled to surrender at discretion, and Nigel Bruce, a youth remarkable for personal beauty, as well as gallantry, fell into the hands of the unrelenting Edward. He was tried by a special commission at Berwick, was condemned, and executed. Christopher Seatoun shared the same unfortunate fate. He also was distinguished by personal valour, and signalled himself in the fatal battle of Methven. Robert Bruce adventured his person in that battle like a knight of romance. He dismounted Aymer de Valence, Earl of Pembroke, but was in his turn dismounted by Sir Philip Mowbray. In this emergency Seatoun came to his aid, and remounted him.

NOTE 22, Page 31.—“Was not the life of Athole shed.”

John de Strathbogie, Earl of Athole, had attempted to escape out of the kingdom, but a storm cast him upon the coast, when he was taken, sent to London, and executed, with circumstances of great barbarity, being first half strangled, then let down from the gallows while yet alive, barbarously dismembered, and his body burnt. Matthew of Westminster tells us that King Edward, then extremely ill, received great ease from the news that his relative was apprehended—“Quo auditio, Rex Anglie, etsi gravissimo morbo tunc langueret, levius tamen tulit dolorem.” To this singular expression the text alludes.

NOTE 23, Page 31.—“Be wrought but quarter, hang, and slay.”

This alludes to a passage in Barbour, singularly expressive of the vindictive spirit of Edward I. “But his will,” says Barbour, “was always evil towards Scottishmen.”

“Scotos, Edwardus, dum vivit, suppeditavit,
Tenuit, affixit, depressit, dilaniavit.”

NOTE 24, Page 31.—“*By Woden wild (my grandsire's oath.)*”

The MacLeods, and most other distinguished Hebridean families, were of Scandinavian extraction, and some were late or imperfect converts to Christianity. The family names of Torquil, Thormod, etc., are all Norwegian.

NOTE 25, Page 32.—“*Expels thee from the church's care.*”

So soon as the notice of Comyn's slaughter reached Rome, Bruce and his adherents were excommunicated. It was published first by the Archbishop of York, and renewed at different times, particularly by Lamberton, Bishop of St Andrews, in 1308; but it does not appear to have answered the purpose which the English monarch expected.

NOTE 26, Page 33.—“*While I the blessed cross advance.*”

Bruce uniformly professed, and probably felt, compunction for having violated the sanctuary of the church by the slaughter of Comyn; and finally, in his last hours, in testimony of his penitence, he requested James, Lord Douglas, to carry his heart to Jerusalem, to be there deposited in the Holy Sepulchre.

NOTE 27, Page 33.—“*De Bruce! I rose with purpose dread.*”

For reasons which it may be difficult to trace, the thunders of Rome descended upon the Scottish mountains with less effect than in more fertile countries. Probably the comparative poverty of the benefices occasioned that fewer foreign clergy settled in Scotland; and the interests of the native churchmen were linked with that of their country. Many of the Scottish prelates, Lamberton the primate particularly, declared for Bruce, while he was yet under the ban of the church, although he afterwards again changed sides.

NOTE 28, Page 34.—“*A hunted wanderer on the wild.*”

This is not metaphorical. The echoes of Scotland did actually

“ ring

With the bloodhounds that bayed for her fugitive king.”

A very curious and romantic tale is told by Barbour upon this subject, which may be abridged as follows:—

When Bruce had again got footing in Scotland in the spring of 1306, he continued to be in a very weak and precarious condition, gaining, indeed, occasional advantages, but obliged to fly before his enemies whenever they assembled in force. Upon one occasion, while he was lying with a small party in the wilds of Cumnock, in Ayrshire, Aymer de Valence, Earl of Pembroke, with his inveterate foe John of Lorn, came against him suddenly with eight hundred Highlanders, besides a large body of men-at-arms. They brought with them a slough-dog, or bloodhound, which, some say, had been once a favourite with the Bruce himself, and therefore was least likely to lose the trace.

Bruce, whose force was under four hundred men, continued to make head against the cavalry, till the men of Lorn had nearly cut off his retreat. Perceiving the danger of his situation, he acted as the celebrated and ill-requited Mina is said to have done in similar circumstances. He divided his force into three parts, appointed a place of rendezvous, and commanded them to retreat by different routes. But when John of Lorn arrived at the spot where they divided, he caused the hound to be put upon the trace, which immediately directed him to the pursuit of that party which Bruce headed. This, therefore, Lorn pursued with his whole force, paying no attention to the others. The king again subdivided his small body into three parts, and with the same result, for the pursuers attached themselves exclusively to that which he led in person. He then caused his followers to disperse, and retained only his foster-brother in his company. The slough-dog followed the trace, and, neglecting the others, attached himself and his attendants to the pursuit of the king. Lorn became convinced that his enemy was nearly in his power, and detached five of his most active attendants to follow him, and interrupt his flight. They did so with all the agility of mountaineers. “What art thou making?” said Bruce to his single attendant, when he saw the five men gain ground on him. “The best I can,” replied his foster-brother. “Then,” said Bruce, “here I make my stand.” The five pursuers came up fast. The king took three to himself, leaving the other two to his foster-brother. He slew the first who encountered him; but observing his foster-brother hard pressed, he sprang to his assistance, and despatched one of his assailants. Leaving him to deal with the survivor, he returned upon the other two, both of whom he slew, before his foster-brother had despatched his single antagonist.

When this hard encounter was over, with a courtesy which in the whole work marks Bruce's character, he thanked his foster-brother for his aid. "It likes you to say so," answered his follower; "but you yourself slew four of the five."—"True," said the king, "but only because I had better opportunity than you. They were not apprehensive of me when they saw me encounter three, so I had time to spring to thy aid, and to return unexpectedly upon my own opponents."

In the meanwhile Lorn's party approached rapidly, and the king and his foster-brother betook themselves to a neighbouring wood. Here they sat down, for Bruce was exhausted by fatigue, until the cry of the slough-hound came so near that his foster-brother entreated Bruce to provide for his safety by retreating further. "I have heard," said the king, "that if you wade a bowshot length down a running stream, it shall make the slough-hound lose scent. Let us try the experiment; for were you devilish hound silenced, I should care little for the rest."

Lorn in the meanwhile advanced, and found the bodies of his slain vassals, over whom he made his moan, and threatened the most deadly vengeance. Then he followed the hound to the side of the brook, down which the king had waded a great way. Here the hound was at fault, and John of Lorn, after long attempting in vain to recover Bruce's trace, relinquished the pursuit.

"Others," says Barbour, "affirm, that upon this occasion the king's life was saved by an excellent archer who accompanied him, and who, perceiving they would be finally taken by means of the bloodhound, hid himself in a thicket, and shot him with an arrow. In which way," adds he, "this escape happened, I am uncertain, but at that brook the king escaped from his pursuers."

NOTE 29, Page 36.—"A pirate sworn was Cormac Dott."

A sort of persons common in the isles, as may be easily believed, until the introduction of civil polity. Witness the Dean of the Isles' account of Ronay:—"At the north end of Raarsay, be half-myle of sea frae it, layes one ile callit Ronay, mair than a myle in length, full of woad and heddir, with one havein for heiland galleys in the middis of it; and the same havein is guid for fosterin' of thieves, ruggairs, and reivars, till a nail upon the peilling and spulzeing of poor popill. This ile portains to M'Gillychallan of Raarsay by force, and to the Bishop of the Isles be heritage."

NOTE 30, Page 38.—"Alas! dear youth, the unhappy time!"

I have followed the vulgar and inaccurate tradition that Bruce fought against Wallace and the array of Scotland at the fatal field of Falkirk. The account given by most of our historians of the conversation between Bruce and Wallace over the Carron river is equally apocryphal. There is full evidence that Bruce was not at that time on the English side, nor present at the battle of Falkirk; may, that he acted as a guardian of Scotland along with John Comyn, in the name of Baliol, and in opposition to the English.

NOTE 31, Page 40.—"The savage wilds that lie."

The following account is extracted from a journal kept during a tour through the Scottish islands:—"The western coast of Skye is highly romantic, and at the same time displays a richness of vegetation in the lower grounds to which we have hitherto been strangers. We opened Loch Scavig, and were now in the western termination of the high ridge of mountains called Cuillen, or Quillin, or Coolin, whose weather-beaten and serrated peaks we had admired at a distance from Dunvegan. They look here upon the sea, but with the same bold aspect their distant appearance had indicated. They appeared to consist of precipitous sheets of naked rock, down which the torrents were leaping in a hundred lines of foam. The tops of the ridge, apparently inaccessible to human foot, were rent and split into the most tremendous pinnacles. Arrived at the depth of the bay, we found that the discharge from a second lake forms a sort of waterfall, or rather a rapid stream, which rushed down to the sea with great fury and precipitation. Round this place were assembled hundreds of trouts and salmon, struggling to get up with the fresh water. Advancing up this huddling and riotous brook, we found ourselves in a most extraordinary scene. We lost sight of the sea almost immediately after we had climbed over a low range of crags, and were surrounded by mountains of naked rock, of the boldest and most precipitous character. The ground on which we walked was the margin of a lake, which seemed to have sustained the constant ravage of torrents from these rude neighbours. The shores consisted of huge strata of naked granite, here and there intermixed with bogs, and heaps of gravel and sand piled in the empty water-courses. Vegetation there was little or none, and the mountains rose so perpendicularly from the water edge, that Borrowdale or even Glencoe is a jest to them. We proceeded a mile and a half

tip this deep, dark, and solitary lake, which was about two miles long, half a mile broad, and is, as we learned, of extreme depth. The murky vapours which enveloped the mountain ridges, obliged us by assuming a thousand varied shapes, changing their drapery into all sort of forms, and sometimes clearing off altogether. It is true, the mist made us pay the penalty by some heavy and downright showers, from the frequency of which, a Highland boy, whom we brought from the farm, told us, the lake was popularly called the water kettle. The proper name is Loch Corriskin, from the deep corrie or hollow in the mountains of Cuillin which affords the basin for this wonderful sheet of water, about two miles long, half a mile broad, and of extreme depth. It is as exquisite a savage scene as Loch Katrine is a scene of romantic beauty—the termination of the lake under one immense precipice, which rises abruptly from the water—ravages which storms must have made in the recesses where all human witnesses were driven to places of more shelter and security. Stones, or rather large masses and fragments of rock of a composite kind, perfectly different from the strata of the lake, were scattered upon the bare rocky beach in the strangest and most precarious situation, as if abandoned by the torrents which had borne them down from above. Some lay loose and tottering upon the ledges of the natural rock with so little security that the slightest push moved them, though their weight might exceed many tons. I never saw a spot in which there was less appearance of vegetation of any kind. Upon the whole, though I have witnessed many scenes of more extensive desolation, I never witnessed any in which it pressed more deeply than at Loch Corriskin, at the same time that its grandeur elevated and redeemed it from the wild and dreary character of utter barrenness.

NOTE 32, Page 44.—“Men were they all of evil men.”

The story of Bruce's meeting with the banditti is copied, with such alterations as the fictitious narrative rendered necessary, from a striking incident in the monarch's History, as told by Barbotin.

NOTE 33, Page 49.—“And mermaid's alabaster grot.”

Imagination can hardly conceive anything more beautiful than the extraordinary grotto discovered not many years since upon the estate of Alexander MacAllister, Esq., of Strath-Aird. It has since been much and deservedly celebrated, and a full account of its beauties has been published by Dr MacLeay of Oban.

“The first entrance to this celebrated cave is rude and unpronouncing; but the light of the torches with which we were provided, was soon reflected from the roof, floor, and walls, which seem as if they were sheeted with marble, partly smooth, partly rough with frost-work and rustic ornaments, and partly seeming to be wrought into statuary. The floor forms a steep and difficult ascent, and might be fancifully compared to a sheet of water, which, while it rushed whitening and foaming down a declivity, had been suddenly arrested and consolidated by the spell of an enchanter. Upon attaining the summit of this ascent, the cave opens into a splendid gallery, adorned with the most dazzling crystallizations, and finally descends with rapidity to the brink of a pool, of the most limpid water, about four or five yards broad. There opens beyond this pool a portal arch, formed by two columns of white spar, with beautiful chasing upon the sides, which promises a continuation of the cave. One of our sailors swam across, for there is no other mode of passing, and informed us (as indeed we partly saw by the light he carried), that the enchantment of MacAllister's cave terminates with this portal, a little beyond which there was only a rude cavern, speedily choked with stones and earth. But the pool on the brink of which we stood, surrounded by the most fanciful mouldings, in a substance resembling white marble, and distinguished by the depth and purity of its waters, might have been the bathing grotto of a naiad. The groups of combined figures projecting, or embossed, by which the pool is surrounded, are exquisitely elegant and fanciful.”—Mr MacAllister of Strath-Aird has, with great propriety, built up the exterior entrance to this cave, in order that strangers may enter properly attended by a guide, to prevent any repetition of the wanton and selfish injury which this singular scene has already sustained.

NOTE 34, Page 53.—“Such hate was his on Solway's strand.”

To establish his dominion in Scotland had been a favourite object of Edward's ambition, and nothing could exceed the pertinacity with which he pursued it. After the battles of Falkirk and Methven, and the dreadful examples which he had made of Wallace and other champions of national independence, he probably concluded that every chance of insurrection was completely annihilated. This was in 1306, when Bruce, as we have seen, was utterly expelled from Scotland.

Yet, in the conclusion of the same year, Bruce was again in arms and formidable; and in 1307, Edward, though exhausted by a long and wasting malady, put himself at the head of the army destined to destroy him utterly. But even his spirit of vengeance was unable to restore his exhausted strength. He reached Burgh-upon-Sands, a pretty village of Cumberland, on the shores of the Solway Firth, and there, 6th July, 1307, expiring in sight of the detested and devoted country of Scotland. His dying injunction to his son required him to continue the Scottish war. To mark his animosity, the dying monarch ordered his bones to be carried with the invading army, "for he believed verily that if they had his bones with them, that the Scots should never attain any victory against them." Edward's commands were not obeyed, for he was interred in Westminster Abbey, with the appropriate inscription:—"EDWARDUS PRIMUS, SCOTOREM MALLEUS, HIC EST."

NOTE 35, Page 56.—"Canna's tower, that, steep and grey."

The little island of Canna, or Cannay, adjoins to those of Rum and Muick, with which it forms one parish. In a pretty bay opening toward the east there is a lofty and slender rock, detached from the shore. Upon the summit are the ruins of a very small tower, scarcely accessible by a steep and precipitous path. Here, it is said, one of the Kings or Lords of the Isles confined a beautiful lady of whom he was jealous. The ruins are of course haunted by her restless spirit, and many romantic stories are told by the aged people of the island concerning her fate in life, and her appearances after death.

NOTE 36, Page 57.—"And Ronin's mountains dark have sent."

Ronin (popularly called Rum, a name which a poet may be pardoned for avoiding if possible) is a very rough and mountainous island, adjacent to those of Eigg and Cannay. There is almost no arable ground upon it, so that, except in the plenty of the deer, which of course are now nearly extirpated, it still deserves the description bestowed by the Archdean of the Isles:—"Ronin, sixteen myle north-west from the ile of Coll, lies an ile callit Ronan Ile, of sixteen myle long, and six in bredthe in the narrowest, ane forest of heigh mountains, and abundance of little deer in it, quhilke deer will never be slane downwith, but the principal acritis man be in the height of the hill, because the deer will be callit upward perforce. In this ile will be gotten about Britane als many wild nests upon the plane mure as men pleassis to gadder, and yet by reson the fowls hes few to star; them except deer. This ile lies from the west to the eist in lenth, and pertains to M'Kenabrey of Colla. Many solan geese are in this ile."—MONRO'S *WESTERN ISLES*, p. 18.

NOTE 37, Page 57.—"On Scur-Eigg next a warning light."

This, and the following lines of the stanza, refers to a dreadful tale of feudal vengeance, of which, unfortunately, there are relics that still attest the truth. Scoor-Eigg is a high peak in the centre of the small Isle of Eigg, or Egg, one of the caverns in which was the scene of a horrid feudal vengeance. This noted cave has a very narrow opening, through which one can hardly creep on his knees and hands. It rises steep and lofty within, and runs into the bowels of the rock to the depth of 255 measured feet; the height at the entrance may be about three feet, but rises within to eighteen or twenty, and the breadth may vary in the same proportion. The rude and stony bottom of this cave is strewed with the bones of men, women, and children, the sad relicts of the ancient inhabitants of the island, so in number, who were slain on the following occasion:—The MacDonalds of the Isle of Egg, a people dependent on Clan-Ranald, had done some injury to the laird of MacLeod. The tradition of the isle says, that it was by a personal attack on the chieftain, in which his back was broken. But that of the other isles bears, more probably, that the injury was offered to two or three of the MacLeods, who, landing upon Eigg, and using some freedom with the young women, were seized by the islanders, bound hand and foot, and turned adrift in a boat, which the winds and waves safely conducted to Skye. To avenge the offence given, MacLeod sailed with such a body of men as rendered resistance hopeless. The natives, fearing his vengeance, concealed themselves in this cavern, and, after a strict search, the MacLeods went on board their galleys, after doing what mischief they could, concluding the inhabitants had left the isle, and had betaken themselves to the Long Island, or some of Clan-Ranald's other possessions. But next morning they espied from the vessels a man upon the island, and immediately landing again, they traced his retreat by the marks of his footsteps, a light snow being unhappily on the ground. MacLeod then surrounded the cavern, summoned the subterranean garrison, and demanded that the individuals who had offended him should

be delivered up to him. This was peremptorily refused. The chieftain then caused his people to divert the course of a rill of water, which, falling over the entrance of the cave, would have prevented his purposed vengeance. He then kindled at the entrance of the cavern a huge fire, composed of turf and fern, and maintained it with unrelenting assiduity, until all within were destroyed by suffocation. The date of this dreadful deed must have been recent, if one may judge from the fresh appearance of those relics. I brought off, in spite of the prejudice of our sailors, a skull from among the numerous specimens of mortality which the cavern afforded. Before re-embarking, we visited another cave, opening to the sea, but of a character entirely different, being a large open vault, as high as that of a cathedral, and running back a great way into the rock at the same height. The height and width of the opening gives ample light to the whole. Here, after 1745, when the Catholic priests were scarcely tolerated, the priest of Eigg used to perform the Roman Catholic service, most of the islanders being of that persuasion. A huge ledge of rocks, rising about half-way up one side of the vault, served for altar and pulpit; and the appearance of a priest and Highland congregation in such a place of worship, might have engaged the pencil of Salvator.

NOTE 38, Page 57.—“That guard famed Staffa round.”

Staffa—a wonder so often described, and yet so incapable of being understood by description. This palace of Neptune is even grander upon a second than the first view—the stupendous columns which form the sides of the cave, the depth and strength of the side which rolls its deep and heavy swell up to the extremity of the vault—the variety of tints formed by white, crimson, and yellow stalactites or petrifications, which occupy the vacancies between the base of the broken pillars which form the roofs and intersect them with a rich, curious, and variegated chasing, occupying each interstice—the corresponding variety below water, where the ocean rolls over a dark-red or violet-coloured rock, from which, as from a base, the basaltic columns rise—the tremendous noise of the swelling tide, mingling with the deep-toned echoes of the vault—are circumstances elsewhere unparalleled. Nothing can be more interesting than the varied appearance of the little archipelago of islets, of which Staffa is the most remarkable. This group, called in Gaelic Treshnish, affords a thousand views to the voyager, as they appear in different positions with reference to his course. The variety of their shape contributes much to the beauty of these spots.

NOTE 39, Page 59.—“Then dragged their bark the isthmus o'er.”

The peninsula of Cartyre is joined to South Knapdale by a very narrow isthmus, formed by the western and eastern Lochs of Tarbet. These two salt water lakes or bays encroach so far upon the land, and their extremities come so near to each other, that there is not above a mile of land to divide them. “It is the opinion of many,” says Pennant, “that these little isthmuses, so frequently called Tarbet, in North Britain, took their name from the circumstance of boats being drawn across them; *tarruung*, signifying to draw; and *bata*, a boat.” (*The Crinan Canal, furthir up Loch Fyne, is the tourist route from Oban to Glasgow.*)

NOTE 40, Page 62.—“That blast was winded by the king.”

The passage in Barbour describing the landing of Bruce, and his being recognised by Douglas and those of his followers who preceded him by the sound of his horn, is in the original singularly simple and affecting. The king arrived in Arran with thirty-three small row-boats. He interrogated a female if there had arrived any warlike men of late in that country. “Surely, sir,” she replied, “I can tell you of many who, lately came hither, discomfited the English governor, and blockaded his castle of Brodick. They maintain themselves in a wood at no great distance.” The king, conceiving this must be Douglas and his people, who had lately set forth to try their fortune in Arran, desired the woman to conduct him to the wood. She obeyed. “The king then blew his horn on high.”

NOTE 41, Page 67.—“A woman in her last distress.”

This incident, which illustrates so happily the chivalrous generosity of Bruce, is one of the many simple and national traits recorded by Barbour. It occurred during the expedition which Bruce made to Ireland to support the pretensions of his brother Edward to the throne of that kingdom.

NOTE 42, Page 73.—“Old Brodick's gothic towers were seen.”

Brodick, or Brothwick, Castle, in the Isle of Arran, is an ancient fortress near an open roadstead called Brodick Bay, and not far distant from a tolerable harbour,

closed in by the isle of Lamlash. This important place had been assailed a short time before Bruce's arrival in the island. James, Lord Douglas, who accompanied Bruce to his retreat in Rachrine, seems, in the spring of 1306, to have tired of his abode there, and set out accordingly, in the phrase of the times, to see what adventure God would send him. Sir Robert Boyd accompanied him; and his knowledge of the locality of Arran appears to have directed him thither. They landed in the island privately, and appear to have laid an ambush for Sir John Hastings, the English Governor of Brodick, and surprised a considerable supply of arms and provisions, and neatly took the castle itself.

NOTE 43, Page 73.—“*A language most unmeet he hears.*”

Barbouy, with great simplicity, gives an anecdote, from which it would seem that the vice of profane swearing, afterwards too general among the Scottish nation, was, at this time, confined to military men. As Douglas, after Bruce's return to Scotland, was roving about the mountainous country of Tweeddale, near the Water of Linc, he chanced to hear some persons in a farm-house say, *The Devil*. Concluding from this hardy expression that the house contained warlike guests, he immediately assailed it, and had the good fortune to make prisoners Thomas Randolph, afterwards the famous Earl of Murray, and Alexander Stuart, Lord Bonkle. Both were then in the English interest, and had come into that country with the purpose of driving out Douglas. They afterwards ranked among Bruce's most zealous adherents.

NOTE 44, Page 74.—“*For, see! the ruddy signal made.*”

The remarkable circumstances by which Bruce was induced to enter Scotland, under the false idea that a signal fire was lighted upon the shore, near his maternal castle of Turnberry—the disappointment which he met with, and the turn of success which arose out of that very disappointment, are curious—and fully narrated by Barbour.—“*They gained the chase, a wide domain.*”

The Castle of Turnberry, on the coast of Ayrshire, was the property of Robert Bruce, in right of his mother. Lord Hailes relates that “Martha, Countess of Carrick, is her own right thefe, wife of Robert Bruce, Lord of Annandale, bore him a son, afterwards Robert I. (11th July, 1274).” The circumstances of her marriage were singular. Lord Hailes mentions that “Happening to meet Robert Bruce in her domains, she became enamoured of him, and with some violence led him to her castle of Turnberry. A few days after she married him, without the knowledge of the relations of either party, and without the requisite consent of the king. The king instantly seized her castle and whole estate. She afterwards atoned by a fine for her feudal delinquency. Little did Alexander foresee that from this union, the restorer of the Scottish monarchy was to arise.”—ANNALES OF SCOTLAND.

NOTE 45, Page 87.—“*The Bruce hath won his father's hall.*”

I have followed the flattering and plausible tradition that the Bruce, after his descent upon the coast of Ayrshire, actually gained possession of his maternal castle. But the tradition is not accurate. The fact is, that he was only strong enough to alarm and drive in the outposts of the English garrison, then commanded, not by Clifford, as assumed in the text, but by Percy; neither was Clifford slain upon this occasion, though he had several skirmishes with Bruce. He fell afterwards in the battle of Bannockburn. Bruce, after alarming the Castle of Turnberry, and surprising some part of the garrison who were quartered without the walls of the fortress, retreated into the mountainous part of Carrick, and there made himself so strong that the English were obliged to evacuate Turnberry, and at length the Castle of Ayr. Many of his benefactions and royal gifts attest his attachment to the hereditary followers of his house in this part of Scotland.

NOTE 46, Page 88.—“*Arouse old friends, and gather new.*”

As soon as it was known in Kyle, says ancient tradition, that Robert Bruce had landed in Carrick, with the intention of recovering the crown of Scotland, the Laird of Craigie, and forty-eight men in his immediate neighbourhood, declared in favour of their legitimate Prince. Bruce granted them a tract of land, still retained by the freemen of Newton to this day. The original charter was lost when the pestilence was raging at Ayr; but it was renewed by one of the Jameses, and is dated at Faulkland. The freemen of Newton were formerly officers by rotation. The Provost of Ayr, at one time, was a freeman of Newton, and it happened to be his turn, while Provost in Ayr, to be Officer in Newton-upon-Ayr, both of which offices he discharged at the same time.

NOTE 47, Page 88. — “*Let Ettrick’s archers sharp their darts.*”

The forest of Selkirk, or Ettrick, at this period occupied all the district which claims that denomination, and embraced the neighbouring dales of Teviotdale; and as the least the Upper Ward of Clydesdale. All that land was probably as waste as it is mountainous, and covered with the remains of the ancient Caledonian forest, which is supposed to have stretched from the Cheviot hills as far as Hamilton, and to have comprehended even a part of Ayrshire. At the fatal battle of Falkirk, Sir John Stuart of Bonkill, brother to the Steward of Scotland, commanded the archers of Selkirk forest, who fell around the dead body of their leader. The English historians have commemorated the tall and stately persons, as well as the unswerving faith of these foresters.

NOTE 48, Page 89. — “*When Bruce’s banner had victorious flow’d.*”

The important advantage gained by Bruce, after landing at Turnberry, was over Aymer de Valence, Earl of Pembroke, the same by whom he had been defeated near Methven. They met, as has been said, by appointment, at Loudon hill, in the west of Scotland. Pembroke sustained a defeat, and from that time Bruce was at the head of a considerable flying army. Yet he was subsequently obliged to retreat into Aberdeenshire, and was there assailed by Comyn, Earl of Buchan, desirous to avenge the death of his relative, the Red Comyn, and supported by a body of English troops under Philip de Mowbray. Bruce was ill at the time of a scrofulous disorder, but took horse to meet his enemies, although obliged to be supported on either side. He was victorious, and it is said that the agitation of his spirits restored his health.

NOTE 49, Page 89. — “*When English blood oft deluged Douglas-dale.*”

The good Lord James of Douglas, during these commotions, often took from the English his own castle of Douglas, but being unable to garrison it, contented himself with destroying the fortifications, and retiring into the mountains. As a reward to his patriotism, it is said to have been prophesied that how often soever Douglas Castle should be destroyed, it should always again arise more magnificent from its ruins. Upon one of these occasions he used fearful cruelty, causing all the store of provisions which the English had laid up in his castle to be heaped together, bursting the wine and beer casks among the wheat and flour, slaughtering the cattle upon the same spot, and upon the top of the whole cutting the throats of the English prisoners. This pleasureantry of the “good Lord James” is commemorated under the name of the “*Douglas’s Larder.*” A more pleasing tale of chivalry is recorded by Godscroft:—“By this means and such other exploits, he so affrighted the enemy, that it was counted a matter of great jeopardy to keep this castle, which began to be called the adventurous castle of Dangerous (Castle Dangerous); whereupon one John Walton, being in suit of an English lady, she wrote him, that when he had kept the adventurous castle of Douglas seven years, then he might think himself worthy to be a suitor to her. Upon this occasion Walton took upon him the keeping of it, and succeeded to Thruswall, but he ran the same fortune with the rest that were before him. Sir James dressed an ambuscade near the place; the disguised carriers, seeing the captain drawn from the castle, did quickly mount themselves on horseback, and met him with a sharp encounter, being so much the more amazed as it was unlooked for; wherefore when he saw these carriers metamorphised into warriors and ready to assault him, fearing that which was, that there was some train laid for them, he turned about to have retired to his castle, but there he also met with his enemies, between which two companies he and his whole followers were slain. The captain afterwards being searched, they found his mistress’s letter about him.”

NOTE 50, Page 89. — “*And fiery Edward routed stout St John.*”

“John de St John, with 1500 horsemen, had advanced to oppose the inroad of the Scots. By a forced march he endeavoured to surprise them, but intelligence of his motions was timely received. The courage of Edward Bruce, approaching to temerity frequently, enabled him to achieve what men of more judicious valour would never have attempted. He ordered the infantry and the meaner part of his army to entrench themselves in strong narrow ground. He himself, with fifty horsemen well harnessed, issued forth under cover of a thick mist, surprised the English on their march, attacked and dispersed them.” — DALEYMPLE’S ANNALS.

NOTE 51, Page 89.—“*When Randolph's war-cry swell'd the Southern gale.*”

Thomas Randolph, Bruce's sister's son, a renowned Scottish chief, was, in the early part of his life, not more remarkable for consistency than Bruce himself. He espoused his uncle's party when Bruce first assumed the crown, and was made prisoner at the fatal battle of Methven, in which his relations' hopes appeared to be ruined. Randolph accordingly not only submitted to the English, but took an active part against Bruce, appeared in arms against him, and in the skirmish where he was so closely pursued by the bloodhound, it is said his nephew took his standard with his own hand. But Randolph was afterwards made prisoner by Douglas, in Tweeddale, and brought before King Robert. Some harsh language was exchanged between the uncle and nephew, and the latter was committed for a time to close custody. Afterwards, however, they were reconciled, and Randolph was created Earl of Moray, about 1312. After this he distinguished himself; first, by the surprise of Edinburgh Castle, and afterwards by many enterprises, conducted with equal courage and ability.

NOTE 52, Page 90.—“*Stirling's towers.*”

When a long train of success, actively improved by Robert Bruce, had made him master of almost all Scotland, Stirling Castle continued to hold out. The care of the blockade was committed by the King to his brother Edward, who concluded a treaty with Sir Philip Mowbray, the governor, that he should surrender the fortress, if it were not succoured by the King of England before St John the Baptist's Day. The King severely blamed his brother for the impolicy of a treaty which gave time to the King of England to advance to the relief of the castle with all his assembled forces, and obliged himself either to meet them in battle with an inferior force or to retreat with dishonour. “Let all England come,” answered the reckless Edward; “we will fight them, were they more.” The consequence was, of course, that each kingdom mustered its strength for the expected battle, and as the space agreed upon reached from Lent to Midsummer, full time was allowed for that purpose.

NOTE 53, Page 90.—“*To summon prince and peer.*”

There is printed in *Rymer's Fædera*, the summons issued to the Sheriff of York. The writ states:—“We have understood that our Scottish enemies and rebels are endeavouring to collect as strong a force as possible of infantry, in strong and marshy grounds, where the approach of cavalry would be difficult, between us and the Castle of Stirling.” It sets forth the king's determination, and with divine grace, to raise the siege, and “to remove our said enemies and rebels from such places as above-mentioned, it is necessary for us to have a strong force of infantry fit for arms.” The Sheriff of York is commanded to equip and send forth a body of four thousand infantry.”

NOTE 54, Page 90.—“*And Cambria, but of late subdued.*”

Edward the First, with the usual policy of a conqueror, employed the Welsh, whom he had subdued, to assist him in his Scottish wars, for which their habits as mountaineers particularly fitted them. But this policy was not without its risks. Previous to the battle of Falkirk the Welsh quarrelled with the English men-at-arms, and after bloodshed on both sides, separated themselves from his army, and the feud between them, at so dangerous and critical a juncture, was reconciled with difficulty. Edward the Second followed his father's example in this particular, and with no better success. They could not be brought to exert themselves in his cause. But they had an indifferent reward for their forbearance. Without arms, and clad only in scanty dresses of linen cloth, they appeared naked in the eyes even of the Scottish peasantry; and after the rout of Bannockburn, were massacred by them in great numbers as they retired in confusion towards their own country. They were under command of Sir Maurice de Berkeley.

NOTE 55, Page 90.—“*And Connought pour'd from waste and wood.*”

There is in the *Fædera* an invitation to Eth O'Connor, chief of the Irish of Connought, setting forth that the king was about to march against his Scottish rebels, and therefore requesting the attendance of all the forces he could muster, either commanded by himself in person, or by some nobleman of his race. These auxiliaries were to be commanded by Richard de Burgh, Earl of Ulster.

NOTE 56, Page 93.—“*Their Chief, Fitz-Louis.*”

Fitz-Louis, or Mac Louis, otherwise called Fullarton, is a family of ancient descent in the Isle of Arran. They are said to be of French origin, as the name intimates. They attached themselves to Bruce upon his first landing; and Fergus Mac Louis, or Fullarton, received from the grateful monarch a charter, dated 26th November, in the second year of his reign (1307), for the lands of Kilmichael and others, which still remain in this very ancient and honourable family.

NOTE 57, Page 93.—“*In battles four beneath their eye.*”

Two days before the battle Bruce selected the field of action, and took post there with his army, consisting of about 30,000 disciplined men, and about half the number of disorderly attendants upon the camp. The ground was called the New Park of Stirling; it was partly open and partly broken by copses of wood and marshy ground. He divided his regular force into four divisions. Three of these occupied a front line, separated from each other, yet sufficiently near for purposes of communication. The fourth division formed a reserve. The line extended in a north-easterly direction from the brook of Bannock, which is so broken and rugged as to cover the right flank effectually, to the village of St Ninians, probably in the line of the present road from Stirling to Kilsyth. Edward Bruce commanded the right wing, which was strengthened by a small body of cavalry under Keith, the marshal of Scotland, to whom was committed the important charge of attacking the English archers; Douglas and the young Steward of Scotland led the central wing; and Thomas Randolph, earl of Moray, the left wing. The king himself commanded the fourth division, which lay in reserve behind the others. The royal standard was pitched, according to tradition, in a stone having a round hole for its reception, and thence called the Bore Stone. It is still shown on a small eminence called Brock's Brae, to the south-west of St Ninian's. His main body thus disposed, King Robert sent the followers of his camp, fifteen thousand and upwards in number, to the eminence in rear of his army, called from that circumstance the *Gillies' (i.e., servants') Hill.*

The ground in front of Bruce's line of battle being part of a park or chase, it was considerably interrupted with trees, and an extensive marsh, still visible, in some places, rendered it inaccessible, and, in all, difficult of approach. More to the northward, where natural impediments were fewer, Bruce fortified his position against cavalry by digging a number of pits, so close together, says Barbour, as to resemble the cells in a honeycomb. They were a foot in breadth, and between two and three deep, many rows of them being placed one behind the other. They were covered with brushwood and green sods, so as not to be obvious to an impetuous enemy. All the Scottish army were on foot, excepting a select body of cavalry stationed with Sir Edward Bruce on the right wing, under the immediate command of Sir Robert Keith, the marshal of Scotland, who were destined for the important service of charging and dispersing the English archers.

NOTE 58, Page 94.—“*Beyond, the Southern host appears.*”

Upon the 23d June, 1314, the alarm warned the Scottish army of the approach of the enemy. Douglas and the Marshal were sent to reconnoitre with a body of cavalry. The two Scottish commanders were cautious in the account they brought back to the camp. To the king in private they told the formidable state of the enemy; but in public reported that the English were indeed a numerous host, but ill commanded and worse disciplined.

NOTE 59, Page 94.—“*With these, the valiant of the Isles.*”

The men of Argyle, the Islanders, and the Highlanders in general, were ranked in the rear. They must have been numerous, for Bruce had reconciled himself with almost all their chieftains, excepting the obnoxious MacDouglas of Lorn. The deed, containing the submission of the potent Earl of Ross to the king, and dated in the third year of Robert's reign, that is 1309, is a curious and valuable document, and throws light on the history of the country.

NOTE 60, Page 95.—“*The Monarch rode along the van.*”

The English vanguard, commanded by the Earls of Gloucester and Hereford, came in sight of the Scottish army, upon the evening of the 23d of June. Bruce was then riding upon a little palfrey, in front of his foremost line, putting his host in order. It was then that the personal encounter took place betwixt him and Sir Henry de Bohun, a gallant English knight, the issue of which had a great effect upon the spirits of both armies; and the incident is graphically told in the pages of

BARBOUR'S BRUCE, vol. ii., p. 122. The Scottish leaders remonstrated with the king upon his temerity. He only answered, "I have broken my good battle-axe." The English vanguard retreated after witnessing this single combat. Probably their generals did not think it advisable to hazard an attack, while its unfavourable issue remained upon their minds.

NOTE 61, Page 98.—"What train of dust, with trumpet sound."

While the van of the English army advanced, a detached body attempted to relieve Stirling. The manœuvre and its results was accompanied by circumstances so highly characteristic of the chivalrous manners of the age, displaying that generosity which reconciles us even to their ferocity upon other occasions. Bruce had enjoined Randolph, who commanded the left wing of his army, to be vigilant in preventing any advanced parties of the English from throwing succours into the Castle of Stirling. As told by Lord Hailes, eight hundred horsemen, commanded by Sir Robert Clifford, were detached from the English army; they made a circuit by the low grounds to the west, and approached the castle. The King perceived their motions, and, coming up to Randolph, angrily exclaimed, "Thoughtless man! you have suffered the enemy to pass." Randolph hastened to repair his fault or perish. Randolph drew up his troops in a circular form, with their spears resting on the ground, and protruded on every side. At the first onset Sir William Daynecourt, an English commander of note, was slain. The enemy, far superior in numbers to Randolph, environed him, and pressed hard on his little band. Douglas saw his jeopardy, and requested the King's permission to go and succour him. "You shall not move from your ground," cried the King; "let Randolph extricate himself as he best may. I will not alter my line of battle, and lose the advantage of my position." "In truth," replied Douglas, "I cannot stand by and see Randolph perish; and, therefore, with your leave, I must aid him." The King unwillingly consented, and Douglas flew to the assistance of his friend. While approaching, he perceived that the English were falling into disorder, and that the perseverance of Randolph had prevailed over their impetuous courage. "Halt," cried Douglas; "those brave men have repulsed the enemy; let us not diminish their glory by sharing it."

NOTE 62, Page 100.—"Pipe-clang, and bugle-sound were toss'd."

There is an old tradition, that the well-known Scottish tune of "Hey, tuitti, tuitti," was Bruce's march at the battle of Bannockburn. Ritson quotes Froissart's account of each soldier in the host bearing a little horn, on which, at the onset, they would make such a horrible noise, as if all the devils of hell had been among them. The tradition, true or false, has been the means of securing to Scotland one of the finest lyrics in the language, the celebrated war-song of Burns—

"Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled."

NOTE 63, Page 100.—"The countless ranks of England drew.

Upon the 24th of June, the English army advanced to the attack. The narrowness of the Scottish front, and the nature of the ground, did not permit them to have the full advantage of their numbers, nor is it very easy to find out what was their proposed order of battle. The vanguard, however, appeared a distinct body, consisting of archers and spearmen on foot, and commanded by the Earls of Gloucester and Hereford. Barbour mentions that they formed nine battles, or divisions; but there was no space for them to extend themselves, so that, except the vanguard, the whole army appeared to form one solid and compact body.

NOTE 64, Page 100.—"See where you bare-foot Abbot stands."

Maurice, Abbot of Inchaffray, placing himself on an eminence, celebrated mass in sight of the Scottish army. He then passed along the front bare-footed, and bearing a crucifix in his hands, and exhorting the Scots, in few and forcible words, to combat for their rights and their liberty. The Scots kneeled down. "They yield," cried Edward; "see, they implore mercy!" "They do," answered Ingleram de Umfraville, "but not ours. On that field they will be victorious or die."—ANNALS OF SCOTLAND, Vol. II., p. 47.

NOTE 65, Page 101.—"Forth, Marshall! on the peasant foe."

The English archers commenced the attack with their usual bravery and dexterity. But against a force, whose importance he had learned by fatal experience, Bruce was provided. A small but select body of cavalry were detached from the right,

under the command of Sir Robert Keith. They rounded, as I conceive, the marsh called Milntown bog, and, keeping the firm ground, charged the left flank and the rear of the English archers. As the bowmen had no spears, nor long weapons, fit to defend themselves against horse, they were instantly driven into disorder, and spread through the whole English army a confusion from which they never fairly recovered.

NOTE 66, Page 105.—“*Lord of the Isles, my trust in thee.*”

When the engagement between the main bodies had lasted some time, Bruce made a decisive movement, by bringing up the Scottish reserve. Tradition affirms that at this crisis, he addressed the Lord of the Isles, in a phrase used as a motto by some of his descendants, “My trust is constant in thee.”

NOTE 67, Page 106.—“*And mimic ensigns high they rear.*”

The followers of the Scottish camp observed, from the Gillies hill in the rear, the impression produced upon the English army by the bringing up of the Scottish reserve, and, prompted by the intense awe of the moment, or the desire of plunder, assumed, in a tumultuous manner, such arms as they found nearest, fastened sheets to tent-poles and lances, and showed themselves like a new army riding to battle. The unexpected apparition, of what seemed a new army, completed the confusion which already prevailed among the English, who fled in every direction, and were pursued with immense slaughter. The brook of Bannock, according to Barbour, was so choked with the bodies of men and horses, that it might have been passed dry-shod. The followers of the Scottish camp fell upon the disheartened fugitives, and added to the confusion and slaughter. Many were driven into the Forth and perished there. About a short mile from the field of battle is a place called the Bloody-faulds. Here the Earl of Gloucester is said to have made a stand, and died gallantly at the head of his own military-tenants, and vassals. He was much regretted by both sides. Sir Marmaduke Twenge, an English knight, contrived to conceal himself during the press of the pursuit, and, when it was somewhat slackened, approached King Robert. “Whose prisoner are you, Sir Marmaduke?” said Bruce, to whom he was personally known. “Yours, sir,” answered the knight. “I receive you,” answered the king; and, treating him with the utmost courtesy, loaded him with gifts, and dismissed him without ransom.

NOTE 68, Page 106.—“*O give their hapless Prince his due.*”

Edward II. showed, in the fatal field of Bannockburn, personal gallantry not unworthy of his great sire and greater son. He remained in the field till forced away by the Earl of Pembroke when all was lost. He then rode to the Castle of Stirling, and demanded admittance; but the governor remonstrated upon the imprudence of shutting himself up in that fortress, which must so soon surrender. He assembled around him five hundred men-at-arms, and, avoiding the field of battle and the victorious army, fled towards Linlithgow, pursued by Douglas with about sixty horse. They were augmented by Sir Lawrence Abernethy, with seventy more, whom Douglas met in the Torwood upon their way to join the English army, and whom he easily persuaded to desert the defeated monarch, and to assist in the pursuit. Edward's flight terminated at Dunbar, where the Earl of March, who still professed allegiance to him, “received him full gustily.” From thence he escaped to Bambourgh in a fishing vessel.

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